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The Imperial Guptas and Their Times

The Imperial Guptas and their Times

(*cir.* AD 300-550)

by

Sachindra Kumar Maity

Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd.

934.018
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First published 1975

© 1975, Maity, S. K. (1921)

Published by
Munshiram Manoharlal
Publishers Pvt. Ltd.
54 Rani Jhansi Road
New Delhi-110055

Printed in India by
Agra Printing Works
Delhi-110032

Dedicated to

the loving memory of my father,

Late Dharanidhar Maity

and

Uncle, Late Gopal Krishna Maity

CONTENTS

Abbreviations viii

Preface xi

Chapter I

Introduction 1

Chapter II

Foundation of the Gupta Empire and their Rise to Success 15

Chapter III

Skandagupta and his Successors and the Decline of the Empire 55

Chapter IV

The Gupta Administration 83

Chapter V

Social Life 101

Chapter V-A

Economic Life 156

Chapter VI

Religion 170

Chapter VII

Education 193

Chapter VIII

Language, Literature, Scripts, Scientific and other Cultural Achievements 204

Chapter IX

Gupta Art 228

Appendix I

Brāhmi Script Through the Ages 247

Selected Bibliography 249

Index 265

ABBREVIATIONS

Ait. Brah.	Aitareya Brahmana.
AHD	Ancient History of Deccan, by J. Debrueil.
AI	Ancient India (Bulletin of the Archaeological Survey of India).
AIC	The Age of Imperial Guptas by R.D. Banerjee.
AISIHC	Ancient India and South Indian History and Culture, by S. Krishnaswamy Aiyangar.
ASS	Ānañadāśram Sanskrit Series, Poona.
Amara.	Amarakosa.
Aps.	Apaśtamba Dharmasutra.
Arri.	Arrian.
ASI. (AR.)	Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report.
Arth	Arthasastra of Kautilya.
AV	Atharva Veda.
Baudh.	Baudhayana Dharmasutra.
Brior Br.	Brhaspati Smrti.
Brhatja	Brhatjatakam.
Brhat	Brhatsamhita.
BMCGD	British Museum Catalogue (Gupta Dynasty).
Comm.	Commentary
CII	Hultzsch, Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, Vol. I.
CII	J.F. Fleet's Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, Vol. III.
Coinage	The Coinage of the Gupta Empire by Dr. A.S. Altekar.
CP	Copper Plate.
Corp. Life	Corporate Life in Ancient India by R.C. Majumdar.

CU	Calcutta University.
DAK	(Puranic Text of the) Dynasties of the Kali Age.
Dic.	Dictionary.
DKM	The Decline of the Kingdom of Magadh, B.P. Sinha.
EHNI	Early History of Northern India (S. Chattopadhyaya).
EI	Epigraphia Indica.
ELGP	Economic Life in Northern India in the Gupta Period by S.K. Maity.
EHI	Early History of India by Vincent A. Smith.
GE	Gupta Era.
Gaut.	Gautama Dharmasutra.
Govt.	Government.
Hemma	Hemmachandra.
HAIB	Historical Aspect of Inscription of Bengal.
HNEI	History of North Eastern India (Basak).
IA	Indian Antiquary.
IC	Indian Culture.
IH	Journal of Indian History.
IHQ	Indian Historical Quarterly.
IMP	Imperial Gazeteer.
Ins.	Inscription.
HIG	History of the Imperial Guptas by Siriram Goyal.
Jat.	Jataka.
JAS	Journal of the Asiatic Society.
JASB	Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.
JASB	Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, New Series.
JBORS	Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society.
JBBRAS	Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society.
JISOA	Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, Calcutta.
JNSI	Journal of the Numismatic Society of India.
JRAS	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.
Kam (or *Kaman*)	Kammandakiya Nitisara.

Kam. Su.	Kamasutra of Vatsyayana.
Kum.	Kumarasambhava of Kalidasa.
Legge or *Fa-hien*	Travels of Fa-hien.
Mal.	Malavikagnimitram of Kalidasa.
MASB	Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.
Matsya.	Matsya Purana.
Mbh.	Mahabharata.
Medha.	Medhatithi.
Megas.	Megasthenes.
Meg.	Meghaduta of Kalidasa.
PHAI	Political History of Ancient India (by H.C. Raychaudhary.
SOAS	School of Oriental And African Studies.
Mudra.	Mudraraksasa of Visakhadatta.
Mrccha.	Mrchchhakatika of Sudraka.
Narada.	Narada-Smrti.
Num Chron.	Numismatic Chronicle.
Num Suppl.	Numismatic Supplement (in the *JRASB*).
Peri.	Periplus of the Erythrean Sea.
Pl.	Plate.
PTS	Pali Text Society.
Raghu.	Raghuvamsa of Kalidasa.
Rajit	Rajatarangini.
Rtu.	Ritusamhara of Kalidasa.
RV	Ṛg-Veda.
Sak.	Sakuntala of Kalidasa.
Select Ins.	Select Inscriptions (bearing on Indian History and Civilization), Vol. I by D.C. Sircar.
SBE	Sacred Book of the East.
SBH	Sacred Book of the Hindus.
Suk.	Sukraniti-Sara.
VGA	The Vakataka Gupta Age by R.C. Majumdar and A.S. Altekar (Vol. VI, New History of Indian People).

PREFACE

Many books have been so far published covering different aspects of the Gupta history and civilization. Inspite of that there is some scope for rethinking of this great civilization which is popularly known as 'the Golden Age of Indian history.' I have been offering this subject to my Post-Graduate students since 1956 and I hope to throw some new light on the above subject.

In course of preparing this book I have received encouragement and help from several of my friends, collegues and learned authorities in allied subjects. First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude and respect to my learned teachers, Drs. A.L. Basham, D.C. Sircar and B.C. Sen whose help and encouragement have helped me to complete this monograph. I am also indebted to Professors Ramaranjan Mukherji, Ram Sharan Sharma, Anil Chandra Banerji, Gopikamohan Bhattacharya, Nemai Sadhan Bose, and Amitava Mukherji who have given me encouragement and suggestions from time to time. I wish to thank Dr.Devaprasad Raychaudhury, Professors Herambha Nath Chatterji, Deb Kumar Chakravarty and many friends, from whom I received various kinds of help in course of this work. I shall be failing in my duty, if I do not express my sense of gratitude and love to Sri Devendra Jain, Editorial Director, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Private Limited, New Delhi, who has taken the responsibility of publishing this monograph. The typescript was very carefully revised and edited by Sri Govinda Nair of New Delhi. Last of all, I should express my love and affection for Mrs. Binapani Maity, Sriman Sumit Kr. Maity and Amitava Maity who have rescued my spirit from running down and have contributed in their own way to the successful completion of this work. For the errors I may have committed, I crave the Indulgence of my readers and request

them to be so good as to draw my attention to them for future correction.

Sachindra Kumar Maity

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Gupta age has been styled variously as the Golden, Classical and the Periclean age of India. The term "Classic" is derived from the Latin epithet *Classicus*, found in a passage of Anlus Gellius, where a *Scriptor Classicus* is contrasted with a *Scriptor Proletarions*. The metaphor is taken from the division of the Roman people into Classes by Servius Tivellius,—those in the first class being called *Classici*, all the rest *Classem* and those in the last *Proletarii*. The epithet "Classic," is, accordingly applied generally to an author of the first rank and more particularly to a Greek or Roman author of that character. A perhaps Indian equivalent of this word is *Arya* as it was used in ancient Indian society. Similarly "the Classics is a synonym for the choicest products of the literature of ancient Greece and Rome. The high esteem in which Greek and Latin were held at the revival of letters obtained for these authors the name of Classics; and when other first rate works are intended, some distinctive name is added, as the English, Spanish or French Classics. Thus, the term Classical refers to the literary and other production of the first rate order.

This age may be called a Golden age in the same sense as the Elizabethan and Victorian. These were times of great material and cultural prosperity with great civic buildings, public undertakings, splendour, opulence and luxury—but only for a limited section of the community. Behind the facade of outward splendour were the toiling masses on whose efforts the whole edifice depended. To warrant the name of Golden or Classical age, as we in the twentieth century would now interpret it, far better conditions would be required for the whole of society, for the peasant as well as for the lord, and economic freedom and prosperity for both.

Before the rise of the Imperial Guptas, India had developed an advanced system of administration, agriculture, industry, trade and currency. The unification of almost the whole of the Gangetic valley by Chandragupta I and his famous son Samudragupta, and the incorporation of Mālwā, Gujarat and Kāthiawar by Chandragupta II ensured a strong and well-organised government for the richest and most populous regions of India. The power and prestige of this new empire rose so high by the time of Samudragupta as to secure respect for the imperial authority from local rulers upto India's natural frontiers in the East, as well as in the West. He did not attempt to extend his empire south of Vindhya mountains, but he carried out a successful military raid into South India. Marching through the jungles of Madhya Pradesh he reached the coast of Orissa (Kalinga) and followed the coast-road as far as Nellore. On his return journey, he received the submission of the kings through his territory he passed, together with huge sums in the form of tribute, but made no attempt to annex their lands permanently. So great was the fame of Samudragupta, that the kings of far distant Ceylon, and of the Śakas and the Kushaṇas of the north-west of India, sent embassies to him.

The annexation of western India by Chandragupta II was not his only achievement. After the premature death of his son-in-law, the Vākāṭaka king Rudrasena II, for about twenty-five years, during the regency of his daughter Prabhāvatī Guptā, the Vākāṭaka kingdom came under the influence of Chandragupta II. He was succeeded by his son, Kumāragupta I (*c.* AD 415-54), who possibly preserved the empire of his forefathers intact. But in the last years of Kumāragupta, his empire suffered a serious blow from the Hūṇas. During the struggle with the Hūṇas he died, and his son, Skandagupta (*c.* AD 455-67), assumed power. He defeated the invaders and was able to establish royal power throughout his empire. But after his death the great days of the Guptas were over. Under the relentless attacks of the Hūṇas the grand fabric of the mighty empire gradually crumbled down. Although the successors of Skandagupta continued to rule their small kingdom, mainly confined to Magadha and Bengal, for a few generations, the local governors ruled almost independently in many parts of the Gupta empire. However, in the hey-day of the Guptas the

people enjoyed peace and prosperity.

Scholars like V.A. Smith, L.D. Barnett, J. Allan, J.F. Fleet, A.L. Basham, E.B. Havell, A.K. Coomaraswamy, D.C. Sircar, R.D. Banerji, R. C. Majumdar, A. S. Altekar, H. C. Raychaudhuri, R.S. Sharma, R.K. Mookerji, B.C. Sen, R.N. Saletore, S. K. Chattopadhyaya, P. L. Gupta, S. R. Goyal, R. N. Dandekar, A. Cunningham, R. V. Dikshitar, U. N. Thakur, U.N. Ghoshal, K.P. Jayaswal, B.P. Sinha, V.S. Upadhyaya, Suvira Jaiswal, D. N. Jha and many others have thrown light on one aspect or another of the above subject in their books or articles. But recent discovery of some new inscriptions, coins and archaeological materials necessitate a reassessment of the date so far known.

As far as possible proper attention has been given to all the Gupta inscriptions, coins, art and architecture, law-books, social and literary works with equal emphasis. Some earlier works like Ṛig Veda, Artharva Veda, Mahābhārata, Jātakas, Arthāśāstra, Manu, Yājñavalkya, Vishṇu, Gautama, Megasthenes and some early inscriptions and the later works like *Śukranīti-Śāra*, *Rājataraṅgini*, *Harshacharita* and some medieval inscriptions have been occasionally used in order to place over subject in its proper historical setting. We have already discussed the sources of the Gupta history and their value for the purpose of studying the importance of this period in connection with our *Economic Life of Northern India in the Gupta Period* (*c.* 300 AD to 550 AD) and *Early Indian Coins and Currency System.* We do not like to repeat it here, but the great value of contemporary inscriptions need some fresh assessment here for elaborate discussion.

Early Indian inscriptions vary considerably in point of length; sometimes it contains a single word or an expression or in many lines in prose and verse; in many cases it represents a poem in many cantos or a drama of several acts. They may, again, be grouped in two classes, those engraved by or on behalf of the ruling authority, and those inscribed on behalf of private individuals or organisations. A good many of them records donation of money and lands to the Brāhmaṇas, temples, Buddhist and Jain monasteries. They also sometimes refer to the installation of images for worship. They are generally small in size; in many cases they also quote the date of event with

reference to the ruling authority. In some cases the place, where the donation was made, is also recorded. Again, the *Praśasti* (eulogistic) type of inscription records works of public utility like construction of temples, excavation of a tank, well, etc. by the king, his official or people in general. In any case the name of the ruler of the country is always there.

It is, however, noticed that quite a large number of epigraphs relates to some ruling authority. Most important among them are royal edicts, epigraphs commemorating a particular achievement of a king in an eulogistic pattern. These grants are sometimes in favour of learned Brāhmaṇas, religious institutions, official and others. The epigraphs recording royal grants of land were generally engraved on copper plates or on stone tablets. The elaborate eulogy of the donor and his predecessors are always there and they help us a great deal in reconstructing the history of ancient past. Most of the facts supplied by them are in many cases not known from any other source.

Many scholars, however, attach little importance to our epigraphic records. J. F. Fleet observes, "It is indeed very questionable whether the ancient Hindus ever possessed the true historical sense in the shape of the faculty of putting together genuine history on broad and critical lines."[1] But they should admit that a study of such epigraphs as the Girnār rock inscription (150 AD) of Rudradāman I, Allahabad stone pillar inscription of Samudragupta, Aihole inscription (634 AD) of Pulakeśin II and Tirumalāi rock inscription (*c.* 1026 AD) of Rājendra Choladeva side by side with chronicles like Kalhana's *Rājataraṅgini* (*c.* 1150 AD) and works like Bāna's *Harshacharita* (seventh century) and Bilhana's *Vikramāṅīkadevacharita* (eleventh century) would suggest that the observation can only be regarded as partially true.

It is also equally correct that many of the literary works and inscriptions are now lost; some are possibly still undiscovered. It is a well known fact that, no less than twelve chronicles dealing with the ancient history of Kashmir, including the works of Nilamuni, Helārāja Chhavillakāra, Padmamihira, Suvrata and Kshemendra (eleventh century) which were available

[1]*Corpus Inscriptionum Indiacarum*, III, *Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings and their Successors.*

to Kalhaṇa in the twelfth century, only a fragment of Nilamuni's chronicle has so far been discovered. It is quite known to us that Indian climate is not favourable for the preservation of manuscripts, written on leaves, bark-cloth and similar other perishable materials. Fortunately, however, some of the documents were engraved on durable materials like stones and metals and quite a large number of them have been discovered.

A great value of inscriptions lies in the fact that they generally offer information about personages and events of Indian history, about which nothing is known from any other source. Only in some cases we have some recorded traditions about such subjects, the details of which can be compared with epigraphic source. Such a comparison very often shows that the details of the traditions are either greatly exaggerated or in many cases wrong.

The value of the epigraphic records lies in the fact that their authors in most cases describe contemporary events. In describing the ancestors of his royal patron, the court poet has sometimes to deal with past events and personages. The material for the description of events of the near past was easily available to him. As regards the distant past, sometimes he depended on recorded or unrecorded tradition. There are also instances like the Kumbhalgarh inscription to show that the author of the epigraphic record tried to collect correct facts with the help of old documents which are available to him. Similarly, the writer of the Junagarh rock inscription of Rudradāman I of 150 AD, while recounting the early history of the Śudarśana lake, says that it was excavated by Rāshtriya Pushyagupta during the reign of Chandragupta Maurya (*c*. 322-98 BC), and that Yavanarāja Tushāspa endowed with irrigation canals on behalf of Aśoka Maurya (*c*. 272-32 BC). It appears that some genuine records about the lake, belonging to the fourth and third centuries BC, were available for consultation to the author of the Junagarh inscription of 150 AD.

Another merit of inscriptions is that their texts are free from variant readings and were not liable to modification, like those of literary works which are copied and recopied by people in later times. Moreover, epigraphic records constitute the most important source for the construction of the lost history of many of the great rulers and ruling families of ancient India.

The great emperor Aśoka is known mostly from his pillar and rock edicts, such was the case with Samudragupta, Rājendra Choladeva and many others.

The dates of well-known poets are also known to us from many epigraphic records. The Aihole inscription of 634 AD records Kālidāsa and Bhāravi as already very famous poets. They, therefore, must have been born before composition of this record. Poets of considerable merit such as Harisena of the Allahabad Pillar inscription of about 350 AD, Vatsahaṭṭi of the Mandasor inscription of 473 AD, Vāscla of another Mandasor inscription of *c.* 530 AD, and Kubja of the Talaguṇḍa inscription of 634 AD are known only from their epigraphic compositions and not from any other source.

Epigraphic records have solved the problem of location of numerous well-known places. The identifications of Śrāvasti and Lumbinī with modern Set-Mahet and Rummindei in the Nepalese Tarai respectively are important. Their locations has been fixed by the Set-Mahet inscription and from the Rummindei pillar inscription. Again the copper-plate grants quoting details regarding the location of gift villages help us a great deal identify the administrative and territorial units of ancient and mediaeval India.

Designations of officers and administrative units known from inscriptions are not generally met with in other sources. A good number of Gupta records show that the local government was in the hands of a board formed by Nagara-Śreshthin, Śarthavāha, Prathama-Kulika and Prathama-Kāyastha. Similarly, a large number of south Indian records describe the proceedings of the meetings of rural administrative boards.

Although our epigraphic records have contributed so largely for the construction of our past history, their evidences are not always free from defects. Historical facts are sometimes overshadowed by poetical, eulogistic and conventional elements and the references to historical events in them are incidental. Their evidence is, therefore, indirect and leaves many things to be surmised and inferred.

The use of common eras in dating inscriptions was not very popular throughout India. Different eras were introduced and popularised in India by the foreign rulers like the Scytho-Pārthians and the Kushāṇas. Inspite of that many early Indian

records are undated and due to the mistakes of astronomical calculation sometimes incorrect dates are recorded in them.

The authors of the *Praśastis* were mostly attached to royal courts; and they were always eager to exaggerate the achievements of their royal patrons and their ancestors. On many occasions such exaggerations spoil the value of inscriptions as source of historical record. For instance, according to the Mahākūṭa pillar inscription, the Chālukya king Kirtivarman I (566-698 AD) of Bādāmi defeated the rulers of Vaṅga, Aṅga, Kaliṅga, Vaṭṭūra, Magadha, Madraka, Kerala, Gaṅga, Mūshaka, Pāṇḍya, Dramila, Ālika and Vaijayantī. But it is impossible to believe that Kirtivarman I actually came into conflict with such far distant rulers as Vaṅga, Aṅga, Magadha and Madraka. The manner, in which the personal names of adversaries are mentioned in the Khālimpur copper plate of Dharmapāla and Deopārā inscription of Vijayasena, are too poetic and artificial and are, therefore, subject to grave doubts about the actual political relationship with many rulers. In some cases the poets are found more eager to display their skill in rhetoric than in the accuracy of their statements. The Chandella King Yaśovarman of the tenth century AD was a feudatory of the Gurjara-Pratihāra king of Kanauj. In a Khajurāho inscription he claimed to have defeated the Gauḍas, Khaśas, Kośalas, Kāśmiras, Mithilas, Mālavas, Cedis, Kurus and Gurjaras. In most cases the writers of the *Praśastis* were reluctant to take notice of the defects and discomfitures of the patrons and their ancestors. Such unpalatable facts were often completely suppressed, and at times they were only vaguely referred to. Here we are mainly concerned with the Gupta records.

Political History

From the study of the Gupta epigraphs like the Allahabad Stone Pillar inscription of Samudragupta composed by his court writer Harisena, the minister of war and peace, we know that the founder of this dynasty was Mahārāja Sri Gupta who was apparently a subordinate ruler and ruling somewhere near Magadha. He was succeeded by his son Mahārāja Ghaṭotkacha and another subordinate ruler was ruling probably under the Lichchhavis. It is also stated in the same epigraph that his son was Mahārājādhirāja Chandragupta I who married the Lichchavi

princess Kumāradevī. It is generally believed that with the help of the Lichchavis he was able to establish independent power in northern India. His relationship with the Lichchhavis is also proved by his Chandragupta-Kumāradevī type of gold coins.

Mahārājādhirāja Chandragupta I was succeeded by his son Mahārājādhirāja Samudragupta. He had issued many coins and inscriptions. Among his inscriptions the Allahabad Stone Pillar inscription, composed by his minister of war and peace, Harisena, Nālanda copper plate, Gayā copper plate and Eran inscription are quite useful for our purpose. But most famous among these Imperial records of the Gupta dynasty is his Allahabad Stone Pillar inscription. It is an undated record. Apparently after completing his conquests and other political engagements with the ruling powers of India and outside India he had asked his minister Harisena to compose this *Praśasti*; and it is the main source of information regarding the reign of Samudragupta.

Samudragupta defeated in warfare nine kings of the *Uttarāpatha* (north India) and their kingdoms were annexed to his empire. They were Rudradeva, Matila, Nāgadatta, Chandravarmana, Ganapatināga, Nāgasena, Achuta, Nandi, Balavarman and others. He also marched against the king of the *Dakshiṇāpatha* (south India). On his way all the kings of the forest states *(sarva-aṭavika-rājya)* submitted to him. The defeated south Indian kings were Mahendra, king of Kośala, Vyāghrarāja of Mahākantāra, Mantrarāja of Kaurāla, Mahendragiri of Paishṭapura, Svāmidatta of Kaṭṭura, Damand of Eraṇḍapalla, Vishṇugopa of Kāñchi, Nilarāja of Āvāmuktaka, Hastivarman of Veṅgi, Ugrasena of Palakka, Kubera of Debarāshtra and Dhanañjaya of Kusthalapura.

The fear of his arms was such that as many as nine tribal states of Rājputana and Punjab paid him homage and paid him tribute. They were Mālava, Arjunāyana, Yaudheya, Madraka, Ābhira, Prarjuna, Sanakānika, Kāka and Kharapārika. Moreover, the kings of the neighbouring states also accepted his suzerainty. They were the kings of Samatata, Davāka, Kāmarupa, Kartripura, Nepal, the Śaka king of western India and the *Devaputra-shāhi-shāhanu-shāhi* (the remnant of the Great Kushāṇas). Over and above king Meghavarṇa of Ceylon sent an ambassador with some costly presents and maidens to

Samudragupta for granting the permission of constructing a Mahāvihāra (monastery) at Bodh-Gaya for the Ceylonese monks. Moreover, many kings of the island countries of the Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean had maintained friendly relation with that great king of kings. All are carefully recorded by Harisena in the Allahabad stone pillar inscription.

Similarly, it is inscribed in the Meharauli Iron Pillar inscription of king Chandra, generally identified as Chandragupta II that he defeated the rebellious kings of the Vaṅga country and his war horses had crossed the "seven mouths of the Indus and defeated the Vālhikas" in the north western India. Thus, from this record it can be inferred that his empire extended from the Bay of Bengal in the east upto the north west frontier of India. Not only that he had married his daughter, Prabhāvatigupta to the Vākāṭaka king, Rudrasena II of the Narmadā valley. But after the premature death of her husband she had to rule the Vākāṭaka kingdom for nearly a quarter of a century; of course, she had always received able guidance and help from her father. Her relationship is recorded in her Poona and Ṛitpur copper plates. Chandragupta II defeated the king of the Śaka country and this can be known from the study of his silver coins (Śaka type) and indirectly from his Mathura, Udayagiri and Sāñchi inscriptions.

Chandragupta II was succeeded by his son Kumāragupta I who possibly maintained the Gupta empire intact left by his father and grand-father. But towards the later part of his reign the Hūṇas invaded India and the Puṣhyamitra of Central India had revolted against the Gupta authority. Kumāragupta I deputed his son Skandagupta in order to tackle the above situation. He was not only able to defeat the Hūṇas but also expelled them from India. He also put down the rebellion caused by the Pushyamitras. All are recorded in his Junagarh Rock inscription and Bhitari Pillar inscription. From a careful study of his inscriptions it can also be said that Skandagupta was the last great king of this dynasty.

But after the death of Skandagupta it is very difficult for us to follow the geneology and the chronology of the Imperial Gupta rulers of Magadha. Many of his successors were defeated by the powerful Hūṇa king, Toramana and his son Mihirakula who in course of time had established a kingdom over a considerable

part of north-western India. Thus, fighting against Mihirakula, Goparāja, a general of Budhagupta lost his life in the battlefield. It is inscribed in the Eran Pillar inscription of Goparāja.

Administrative History

The Gupta ruler was the head of the state; he was the supreme commander of the royal army, head of the judiciary, legislative and executive affairs. In his numerous responsible works he was assisted by a group of civil and military officials, such as, *Mahādaṇḍanāyaka* (chief of the royal army), *Manṭrins* (minister of war and peace, etc.), *Amātyas* (high officials of the state), *Kumārāmātyas* (provincial governors etc.), *Mahāpilupati* (chief commander of the royal elephants), *Pushtapālas* (record-keepers) and others. All are recorded in the numerous Gupta inscriptions, such as, Allahabad Stone Pillar inscription, Nālanda copper plate, Gaya copper plate of Samudragupta, Sāñchi Stone inscription, Gadhwa inscription, Mathura inscription, Meharauli Iron Pillar inscription of king Chandra (Chandragupta II), Damodarpur copper plate, Mandasor inscription of Kumāragupta I and Bandhuvarman, Junagarh Rock inscription, Bihar stone pillar inscription, Bhitari pillar inscription, Indore copper plate of Skandagupta and others. There was, however, no clear cut division of civil and military works for the officials of the Gupta state. In case of warfare and other emergencies all are supposed to work in the battlefield in their respective capacity.

For the betterment of administration the whole of the Gupta empire was divided into so many divisions, called, *Deshas* or *Vishayas*, *Bhukties* and *Grāmas* (villages). The provincial governers were directly appointed by the king and was also responsible to the king. In the same way Parṇadatta was appointed by Kumāragupta I in the western-most province of Junagarh region. He was succeeded by his son Chakrapālit who worked under the Gupta emperor Skandagupta. All are inscribed in the Junagarh Rock inscription and Bhitari pillar inscription of Skandagupta. Provinces were so to say a miniature state having all the administrative and military machinery like the Central Government. They enjoyed greater autonomy in all civil and military matters. Provincial governors on the other hand used to appoint the district heads. In administrative matters he

was assisted by a group of representative people, such as, *Nagara-Śreshthi* (chief merchant of the town), *Sārthavāha* (chief caravan leader), *Prathama-Kulika* (chief artisan), *Prathama-Kāyastha* (chief scribe), etc. The villages were administered by the Grāmikas, Mahattras, Kuṭumbikas and others. All are recorded in many Gupta epigraphs.

Economic Life

From a careful study of inscriptions we can form a clear idea about the economic life of the day. Land was the main source of wealth of the state and thus king was the head of "all lands and seas; (2) and the Gupta epigraphs also give the idea that the ruler of the land was the ultimate owner of all lands in his kingdom. The epigraphic records also offer us with the knowledge of land tenure, land measurement, land survey, land sale and land grants.

From a careful study of five Dāmodarpur copper plates, three Faridpur copper plates, Paharpur copper plate, Baigram copper plate and others, we can form an idea about the land revenue, such as, the state used to collect 1/6 of the produce of the land as a state revenue. Not only that, inscriptions also reflect the condition of agriculture, industry, internal and foreign trade, corporate economic life, slave labour, forced labour, hired labour, and the means of daily exchange. By spending two, three or four *suvarṇas (dīnāras*, gold coins*)* one could expect to purchase one *Kulvavapa* of land which amounts to a very large area. Similarly, by depositing ten, twelve or fifteen *suvarṇas* apparently with a guild it is again expected to run a charitable hall or to maintain certain religious services in temples or monasteries as long as the sun and moon are on earth only out of the interest of the above sum. In that case different industrial guilds used to take money from different persons as a permanent deposit (modern fixed deposit) and to invest the money in their own business or to lend them to others on interest basis. They are recorded in the Damodarpur copper plates, Faridpur copper plates, Gadhwa copper plate of Chandragupta II, Mandasor inscription of Kumaragupta I and Bandhuvarman. Indore copper plate of Skandagupta, etc.

Social Life

From a careful survey of a large number of the Gupta epigraphs, we can have some idea about the caste system, position of women, condition of slave labour and many other aspects of social life.

The position of women was generally fair in the Classical age. Kumāradevī, the wife of Chandragupta I was the most influential queen in the whole range of the early Indian history and she can be compared with Diddā, the famous queen of Kshemagupta of Kashmir. The contemporary Vākāṭaka epigraphs record the life of the queen mother, Prabhāvatīgupta as a princess regent. Apparently, with the able guidance and assistance of her father, Chandragupta II she ruled the Vākāṭaka kingdom for nearly a quarter of a century. She also donated lands to the Brāhmaṇas.

Due importance was given to the chief queen in social and religious affairs. They were known as Mahādevī in the Gupta records. Even the ordinary ladies like Harisvāmini, the wife of Sanasidha donated and deposited sixteen *dīnāras* (gold coins) permanently with a guild for feeding one Bhikshu day by day and for lighting lamp in the sanctuary. Again, the polygamy was in vogue in the Gupta society; and lot of references are there in literature. From the Bilsad pillar inscription of Kumāragupta I, and from the Poona and Ṛithpur copper plates of Prabhāvatīguptā it is known to us that Chandragupta II had at least two wives, *viz.* Dhruvadevī and Kuberanāga. Similarly, Mahādevī Anantadevī was the chief queen of Kumāragupta I; and was the mother of Purugupta but we do not know the name of the mother of Skandagupta.

Religious Life

The Gupta epigraphic records also suggest that the Gupta emperor were Brahmanical Hindus. Vishṇu and Lakshmī were their most favourite god and goddess. In many inscriptions and coins they are styled as *Paramabhāgavata-mahārājādhirāja.* Besides Vishṇu and Lakshmī they used to worship the sun (Surya), Kārtikeya, Indra, Varuṇa, Śiva, Durgā, Gaṅga and others. They also liberally endowed money, lands and cows to the temples and to the Brāhmaṇas. But from the study of the

Sāñchi inscription of Chandragupta II, Mankumar Buddhist stone inscription of Kumāragupa I and his Sāranāth Buddhist Image inscription and from many others, we are in a position to say that the Gupta rulers also showed equal favour towards the Buddhists and Jains. Thus, they maintained a sort of religious catholicity throughout their kingdom.

General Welfare

The Gupta emperors also looked after the general welfare of their subjects. The Gadhwa stone pillar inscriptions of Chandragupta II and Kumāragupta I records the deposition of gold coins with some guilds for the perpetual maintenance of Charitable halls. The Gupta inscriptions also refer to the construction of lakes, tanks and wells for the benefit of people. In the early period the Great Emperor Aśoka also did many benevolent and philanthropic activities for the general welfare of his numerous subjects.

Language, Literature and Scripts

A remarkable development took place in the field of Sanskrit literature and language in the Classical age. The inscriptions of the Gupta period such as the Allahabad Stone pillar inscription of Samudragupta composed by Harisena, Mandasore inscriptions of Kumāragupta I and Bandhuvarman written by Batsabhaṭṭi, Junagarh Rock inscription and Bhitari Pillar inscription of Skandagupta and many such epigraphs of this period also indicate that the high flown *Kāvya* style was already in a mature state as early as the fourth or fifth century AD. The Gupta inscriptions are mainly written in the Brāhmi script and it developed a great deal in that period.

Apart from a general reconstruction, we have laid special emphasis on the reorientation of existing knowledge on the subject, by interpreting and elucidating known, half-known and misunderstood facts in the light of upto-date information. We have, however, divided our works into ten convenient chapters. The first chapter deals with the utility, scope and sources of our subject. The second chapter tells us about the political set up of the empire. The third chapter discusses the administrative system. The fourth chapter describes economic life and the sixth deals with religion. The seventh chapter surveys the system

of education and the eighth deals with language, literature, scripts, scientific and other cultural achievements. The ninth offers a picture of Gupta art and the last chapter includes the achievements of the Imperial Gupta rulers of Magadha.

CHAPTER II

FOUNDATION OF THE GUPTA EMPIRE AND THEIR RISE TO SUCCESS

In the sixth century BC there were as many as sixteen Mahājanapadas (Great States) as well as many small states in northern India. Among them Magadha, Kośala, Vatsa and Avantī became gradually powerful at the cost of their weak neighbours. During the middle of the sixth century BC Bimbisāra was on the throne of Magadha, Udayana on that of Vatsa, Prasenjit on that of Kośala and Pradyota on that of Avantī. These royal families were sometimes united by matrimonial alliances and were sometimes at war. The process of gradual absorption of the weaker states by the more powerful ones continued throughout the century. The rise of Magadha to supremacy in the next period was a natural outcome of this process. Most of the states of the northern and southern India felt its power under the Mauryas. The Maurya period ushered in a most glorious period in politics as well as in art and culture. The Mauryas had a vast well organised empire under their able administration. But with the fall of the Imperial Mauryas passed away the political unity of India. The flood-gate of foreign invasions remained open for three centuries. The Greeks had showed the way and were followed by the (Scythians, Pārthians) Śakas and the Kushāṇas.

A century before the rise of the Imperial Guptas, the Kushāṇas and the Sātavāhanas completely lost their political control over their respective kingdoms. At this time rose the Nāgas in the Gaṅgā-Yamunā valley and the Vākāṭakas in the Deccan. The Śakas established their control over Malwa, Kathiawad and in their neighbourhood. In Magadha, the Lichchhavis rose to prominence and the Gupta chieftains perhaps ruled somewhere in Bengal, apparently under the command of the Lichchhavis.

With the rise of the Gupta power in northern India, history and civilization of the sub-continent entered a new epoch. The fall of the Kushāṇas was followed by a century of confusion and chaos which helped the birth of many petty mushroom states. There was no paramount power in India. But the Imperial Guptas brought about a transition from darkness to light, from an unsettled, disorganized state of things to a systematic progress and civilization. Almost the whole of northern India was united under a strong and enlightened government. The Guptas ushered in age of social and cultural reconstruction unrivalled in any other age of India's ancient history. L. D. Barnett aptly remarks, 'The Gupta period is in the annals of classical India almost what the Periclean age is in the history of Greece.''[1]

Origin and Home of the Imperial Guptas

The origin of the Imperial Guptas is rather obscure. 'Gupta' was the name of the father of a great Buddhist saint, Upagupta.[2] In connection with certain grammatical rules the great grammarian, Chandragomin refers to "Ajayad-Jarto (? Jato or Japto) Hunan." According to K. P. Jayaswal,[3] "this pre-eminently refers to Skandagupta" who defeated the Hūṇas and they were Jāts. But some scholars think that '*Japto*' may be the copyist's mistake for 'Gupta.' Again, Prabhāvatī Guptā, daughter of Chandragupta II, belonged to Dharana-gotra which was the *gotra* of her father and not of her husband.[4] They might have been related to Dhārini, the chief queen of Agnimitra, but it is rejected by R. C. Majumdar[5] and others. It is, however, quite likely that 'Gupta' was the surname of the Imperial Gupta rulers of Magadha. For instance, we have only the first name of Śrī-Chandra, Chandra, Narendra-Chandra, Siṃha-Chandra from the legend of the copper coins of Chandragupta II.[6]

From epigraphic records, the existence of Gupta families in northern and southern India can be traced from the very early

[1] *JRAS*, 1917, p. 417.

[2] Cowell and Neil ed., *Divyavadāna*, p. 348.

[3] *History of India 150 AD-350 AD*, p. 115.

[4] Raychaudhuri, H. C., *Political History of Ancient India*, p. 528 n.

[5] Majumdar, R. C. and Altekar, A. S., *Vākāṭaka Gupta Age*, pp. 120-21.

[6] Altekar, A. S., *Corpus of Indian Coins*, IV, *The Coinage of the Gupta Empire and its Limitation.*

times. There were many "Guptas" among the officials of the Sātavāhanas. An old Brāhmi inscription and a Bhārhut Buddhist Pillar inscription of the Suṅga period refer to princes and queens born of the Gupta family (Gupta-Vamśodita).[1] But we are not sure whether these Guptas had any relation with the Imperial Guptas of Magadha.

The Allahabad Pillar inscription of Samudragupta records that he "was the son of the son's son of the Mahārāja, the illustrious Śrī Gupta;[2] the son's son of the Mahārāja, the illustrious (Śrī) Ghaṭotkacha; the son of Mahārājādhirāja, the illustrious (Śrī) Chandragupta, and the daughter's son of the Lichchhavi *(dauhitra)* begotten on the Mahādevī Kumāradevī."[3] As Mahārāja Śrī Gupta was the founder of this dynasty, the name of his family was, thus, derived from him.

Home : There is also a great deal of controversy regarding the original home of the Imperial Guptas. In the opinion of J. Allan, the territory of Śrī-Gupta "probably lay around Pāṭaliputra, which may have been his capital."[4] K. P. Jayaswal, on the other hand, suggests that it was situated in the Punjab.[5] These are based on assumptions. But D. C. Ganguly offers reasonable arguments on the basis of the following facts and suggests that the early home of the Guptas was in *Bengal* and not in Magadha.[6]

The Chinese pilgrim, I-tsing travelled in India in 671-695 AD. He records that a great king (Mahārāja), Śrī-Gupta (Che-li-ki-to) built a temple near Mṛigasikhāvana (Mi-li-kia-si-kia-pono) for the Chinese pilgrims and endowed twenty-four villages for its maintenance.[7] It was constructed 500 years before his visit. Śrī-Gupta, therefore, must have ruled in about 175 AD. But "Considering the lapse of time and the fact that the Chinese pilgrim gives the statement on the authority of a tradition handed down from ancient times by old men, there seems no

[1]Lūders, No. II and No. 687.

[2]"Śrī" in every case is the honorific title.

[3]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 1; Sircar, D. C., *Select Inscriptions bearing on Indian Culture and Civilization*, I, p. 254.

[4]Allan, J., *Catalogue of the Coins in the British Museum, Gupta Dynasty*, p. XVI.

[5]*Op. cit.*

[6]*IHQ*, XVI, p. 532.

[7]Allan, *BMCGD*, p. XV.

reason to doubt the identification on chronological grounds."[1] Thus, some margin of error my always be allowed and his *Che-li-ki-to* is identified with Śrī-Gupta who ruled most probably towards the end of the third century AD. Similarly, another Chinese pilgrim, Yuan-Chwang places the Hūṇa king, Mihirakula "several centuries[2] before his time. But we know that the Hūṇa king ruled just a century before his time. In an early period the Greek ambassador, Megasthenes also made several mal-observations in his account.[3]

According to the description of I-tsing, Mṛigasikhāvana was situated "about 50 stages *(Yojanas)* to the north east of Nālandā down the Ganges," while Nālandā was 7 stages to the north-east of Mahābodhi. As the distance between Nālandā and Mahābodhi is about 40 miles, I-tsing's *Yojana* (or stage) was about 5 to 6 miles, calculating on this basis Mṛigasikhāvana is about 250 miles from Nālandā in Bihar and it is, thus, situated in the Murshidabad district of West-Bengal.[4] It is further supplemented by an illustrated Cambridge manuscript from Nepal dated 1015 AD. There is a picture of a stupa with the label "Mṛigathāpana stupa of Varendra".[5] Foucher has pointed out that this Mṛigasthāpana should be Mi-li-ki-si-kia-po-no and not Mṛigsikhāvana as liberally translated by Chavannes.[6] From the above discussion it, thus, follows that Śrī-Gupta (Che-li-ki-to) ruled in Varendri. But Murshidābād is not in Varendri; it is in the Rādha division. Sandhyākara Nandi places Varendri between the Ganges and the Karatoyā. It rather includes the modern districts of Dinājpur, Māldāh, Rājshāhi, Bogra and Rangpur. Thus, supporting the suggestion of D.C. Ganguli some scholars suggest that the kingdom of Śrī-Gupta, perhaps, included a portion of North Bengal and West Bengal.

D.C. Sircar has criticised the above identification of the home of the Imperial Guptas. In the testimoney of I-tsing, Varendrī was included within the dominions of Śrī-Gupta; but this inclusion does not necessarily mean that it was the original

[1]Allan, *BMCGD*, p. XV.
[2]Watters, Thomas, *Yuan Chwang*.
[3]Tr. McCrindle.
[4]Raychaudhuri, *PHAI*.
[5]Majumdar, R.C., *History of Bengal*, I, p. 69.
[6]Chattopadhyaya, Sudhakar, *Early History of North India*, p. 137.

home of the Guptas. Moreover, the above identification does not tally with the Purāṇic testimony which includes Sāketa (Oudh) among the early dominions of the Guptas.

Similarly, S.R. Goyal has offered some weighty argument in favour of placing the original home of the Imperial Guptas in the eastern parts of Uttar Pradesh (*i.e.* the region east of Lucknow).[1] Early inscriptions and coins have mostly been found from this region. The earliest Gupta gold coins, such as, the Chandragupta-Kumāradevi coins have been found in the eastern part of Uttar Pradesh. "Their recorded find spots are Mathurā, Ayodhyā, Lucknow, Sitapur, Taṇḍā, Ghazipur and Banaras in U.P. and Bayanā in the Bharatpur state."[2] Even Altekar, who is a strong supporter of the theory of Magadhan origin of the Guptas was[3] astonished to remark, "It is rather strange that no finds of his (Chandragupta I's) coins should so far have been recorded in Bihar, the home province of the Gupta empire."[4] It is also interesting to note that as many as fourteen hoards of the Gupta gold coins have been discovered in eastern Uttar Pradesh, two in Bihar and two in Bengal.[5] Moreover, fifteen inscriptions of the hundred-fifty years of the Gupta rule have been found in the eastern part of Uttar Pradesh, Magadha and Bengal. Among them five inscriptions from Bengal belong to the later period and Gayā and Nālandā copper plates from Bihar are "spurious"; and the famous inscription of Samudragupta is his Allahabad *Praśasti.*

It can, however, be said that Śrī-Gupta was a petty king ruling over a small kingdom and as such his territory could not extend from Bengal to Oudh. It was rather confined to Murshidābad or some other places of West and North Bengal. Different Purāṇas give different versions regarding the dominions of the early Gupta rulers, Śrī-Gupta and Ghaṭotkachagupta. The historical value of the Purāṇas is always doubtful. The

[1] *A History of the Imperial Guptas*, p. 45.

[2] Altekar, *Coinage*, p. 26.

[3] Goyal, p. 45-46.

[4] Altekar, *Coinage*, p. 26

[5] *Ibid*, 14 hoards (U.P.), Barsar (Banaras), Tanda (Fyzabad), Kotwa (Gorakhpur), Allahabad, Bisti, Kasarva (Ballia), Tekri Debra (Mirzapur), Madankota (Jaunpur), Gopalpur (Gorakhpur), Jhusi (Allahabad), Jaunpur, Rapti, Devattha (Ballia), Kusumbhi (Unnao) 2 (Bengal)—Kalighat, Hugli, 2 (Bihar)—Hazipur, Banka (Bhagalpur).

Purānic account, on the other hand, may signify the empire ruled by Mahārājādhirāja Chandragupta I and not by his father and grand-father who were simply Mahārājas. Chandragupta I married the Lichchhavi princess Kumāradevī and "at the time of this fateful union the Lichchhavis were masters or overlords of the ancient imperial city,[1] and that, Chandragupta, by means of his matrimonial alliance, succeeded to the power previously held by his wife's relatives.[2] Moreover, the early Gupta empire was subsequently extended and consolidated by the valour of Chandragupta I, Samudragupta and others and at that stage of development Pāṭaliputra, which was the famous capital of the Great Mauryas and whose palaces and buildings were still beautiful and Magadh still held its former glory,[3] was very naturally selected as their capital. Over and above, from the military point of view, which was the prime concern in ancient period, Pāṭaliputra was a fortified capital city. And Chandragupta I and his successors did not take the trouble of building a new city again in Bengal. There is, thus, enough reason to find a greater number of coins and inscriptions of Chandragupta I and his successors from Uttar Pradesh and Magadha; and both were within the ancient Madhyadeśa as described by Fa-hien[4] and was the central part of the Gupta empire.

POLITICAL HISTORY

Mahārāja Śrī-Gupta and Ghaṭotkachagupta

The founder of the Imperial Gupta dynasty was Mahārāja Śrī-Gupta who was a subordinate king ruling under the Lichchhavis of Magadha. V. A. Smith suggests that he governed his small kingdom from *c.* 275 to 300 AD.[5] He was succeeded by his son, Mahārāja Ghaṭotkacha Gupta; and like his father he is also known to us from the inscriptions of his successors.[6] His date may be conjectured as *c.* 300 to 320 AD.[7]

[1]Ref. Pāṭaliputra, Basak, R.G., *History of North-Eastern India*, pp. 268-69.
[2]Smith, *EHI*, p. 295.
[3]Fa-hien, p. 58.
[4]*Ibid*, pp. 34-37.
[5]*Indian Archaeology*, *1902*, p. 258.
[6]*CII*, III, p. I, 25, 42, 47, 52.
[7]*BMCGD*, p. xvii.

Chandragupta I

Mahārāja Ghaṭotkachagupta was succeeded by his son, Mahārājādhirāja Chandragupta I. The Purāṇas, the Chandragupta-Kumāradevī type of gold coins and the inscriptions of his successors are the sources of information regarding his career and achievements.

Mahārājādhirāja Chandragupta I was the first independent sovereign of the Gupta dynasty. It is clearly indicated by the assumption of the higher title Mahārājādhirāja by him in the epigraphic records, while his father and grand-father were simply known as Mahārājas.[1] This is further substantiated by the issue of the Chandragupta-Kumāradevī type of gold coins.[2]

Like his great fore-runner Bimbisāra, Chandragupta I strengthened his position by a matrimonial alliance with the Lichchhavis of Magadha (or Vaiśālī or Nepal)[3] and laid the foundation of the second Magadhan Empire. The union of Chandragupta I with the Lichchhavi princess Kumāradevī is commemorated by a new series of gold coins. On the obverse of the coin Chandragupta I offers apparently a marriage ring to his favourite queen, Mahādevī Kumāradevī. In one specimen A. S. Altekar has identified the object as a "*Sinduradāni*."[4] On the reverse of these coins the goddess, seated on a lion, is identified as *Siṁhavāhinī* Durgā (or Ambikā), holding a noose in the right hand and a cornucopia in the left. The cornucopia, a symbol of plenty, signifies that the Gupta Empire would be "over-flowed with flowers, fruits and corn"; and the noose indicates a sort of permanent tie of the goddess with Chandragupta. The coin legend on the obverse is "Chandra (or Chaṁdra) Gupta and Śrī-Kumāradevī (or Kumāradevī-Śri) and on the reverse "*Lichchhavayaḥ*."[5] It implies that the prosperity of Chandragupta was due to his Lichchhavī alliance.[6]

The Gupta-Lichchhavī relation marked a turning point in the

[1]*Fleet*, p. 1, 25, 42, 47, 52.

[2]Altekar, *CGE*, p. 26.

[3]Smith, V.A., *Early History of India*, p. 295; Sircar, *Select Ins.*, p. 254; Banerji, R.D., *The Age of Imperial Guptas*, p. 4.

[4]*BMCGD*, p. LXXIII; Altekar, *Coinage*, p. 26; Smith, *EHI*, p. 100.

[5]Altekar, p. 26.

[6]*Ibid*, p. 32; Sircar, *Select Ins.*, p. 254 fn. 2.

fortune of the Gupta family. It is evident from the pride with which it is mentioned by Chandragupta's son and successor, Samudragupta and others. Samudragupta was proud of calling himself as the *Lichchhavī-dauhitra* (i.e. the daughter's son of the Lichchhavīs).[1] V.A. Smith, who first initiated a systematic study of the Gupta coins, suggests that the Lichchhavīs were ruling in Pāṭaliputra and that through his marriage Chandragupta I succeeded to the possession of his wife's relation.[2] He, then, secured a paramount position in Magadha and its neighbourhood; and Pāṭalīputra became his capital.

J. Allan, on the other hand, thinks that the "pride of the Guptas in their Lichchhavī blood was probably due rather to the ancient lineage of the Lichchhavīs than to any material advantages gained by this alliance.[3] It may be doubted, however, whether the Lichchhavīs enjoyed at this time a very high status in society. For the Manu-Saṁhitā, which was undoubtedly held in high respect about this time, regards the Lichchhavīs as a kind of degraded Kshatriyas (*Vrātya-Kshatriyas*).[4] It, therefore, appears highly likely, that the marriage alliance of Chandragupta I was valuable from a political rather than a social point of view.[5]

Some other scholars suggest[6] that although we may accept the view that the political greatness of the Guptas was due largely to their Lichchhavī alliance, we do not know with certainty anything about the political status of the Lichchhavīs at that time. Although the Lichchhavīs were at that time ruling in Nepal and other places, it is not known whether Kumāradevī was born in any of those ruling Lichchhavī families. The view, that they ruled in Magadha, rests on very dubious grounds.[7]

It is, however, very probable that the Lichchhavīs were ruling over Magadha[8]; and Chandragupta I was the ruler of a neighbouring kingdom. As a result of this marriage both the king-

[1]Altekar, *Coinage*, p. 26; Sircar, *Select Ins.*, 254 fn. 21.
[2]*EHI*, p. 294.
[3]Allan, *BMCGD*, p. XLX.
[4]Manu, X. 22.
[5]Majumdar, R.C. and Pusalker, A.D., *The Classical Age*, p. 43.
[6]Altekar, *Coinage*, p. 26; Sircar, *Select Ins.*, p. 254; Smith, *EHI*, p. 295.
[7]Chattopadhyaya, *EHNI*, pp. 141-46.
[8]Majumdar and Altekar, *VGA*, p. 130.

doms were united together;[1] and we have no reference that Magadha and its environs were conquered by his son and successor, Samudragupta. The epithet *Lichchhavī-dauhitra* was deliberately, given to Samudragupta to emphasise his right of succession to the dual monarchy. It also enabled Chandragupta I to assume the imperial title of *Mahārājādhirāja.*[2]

Very little is known with certainty about the extent of Chandragupta's kingdom. His dominion must have been large enough to justify his assumption of the imperial title *Mahārājādhirāja* and support Samudragupta's career as a great conqueror. J. Allan[3] thinks that the Purānic passage—

"Anu-Gangā-Prayāgamcha-Sākatam-Magadhanstaṭha
Etān-janapadān-Sarvān-bhakshyante-Guptavaṁśajaḥ"

refers to the dominion of Chandragupta I. "The kings born of the Gupta family will enjoy all these territories along the Ganges, viz., Prayāga (Allahabad), Sāketa (Oudh), and Magadha (South Bihar).[4] Apparently this refers to the dominion of Chandragupta I, for the above territories were not conquered by his son and successor, Samudragupta; he, rather inherited them.

It is generally believed that the Gupta era of 319-20 AD marks the year of his accession to the throne. According to R.C. Majumdar, there is another possibility of dating the Gupta era; it commemorates the coronation of Samudragupta, the greatest king of this dynasty.[5] However, the chronology of the early Gupta kings can be fixed only with reference to this era.

Let us suppose that Chandragupta I ascended the throne in 319 (or 320) AD, the first year of the Gupta era. Taking 25 years for each reign, the rule of Śrī-Gupta and Ghaṭotkachagupta can be placed from 270 AD to 320 AD. On the other

[1]It is the view of Smith (*EHI*, p. 295), S. Krishnaswami Aiyanger, (*Ancient India and South Indian History and Culture*, p. 181), Altekar (*Coinage*, p. 2), Majumdar and Altekar (*VGA*, p. 129) and others.

[2]Basak, R.G., *The History of North-Eastern India*, p. 7; *JNSI*, V, p. 40; Altekar, A.S., *Catalogue of the Gupta Gold Coins in the Bayana Hoard*, p. XL, fn 1.

[3]Wilson, H.H., English trans. *Vishṇu Purāna*, p. 479 n 70; Allan, *BMCGD*, p. XIX; Pargiter, F.A., *The Purāṇa Text of the Dynasties of the Kali Age*.

[4]*Ibid* ; Chattopadhyaya, *EHNI*, pp. 138-39

[5]*The Classical Age*, p. 16.

hand, if the date of the coronation of Samudragupta is 319 (or 320) AD, the reign period of Śrī-Gupta must be pushed back to 245 AD. This would be more in accordance with the statement of the Chinese pilgrim I-Tsing which places Śrī-Gupta about 500 years before his time. He visited India at about 671 to 695 AD.

There are another group of scholars who place the Gupta era earlier than 319 AD Shām Śāstrī holds that the initial year of the Gupta era is 200-201 AD.[1] Govinda Pai also suggests that the era originated in 272-373 AD. Now, the Ganjam plates of Śaśāṅka was in the Gupta year of 300[2] and its date would be 500 AD or 572 AD. But this does not tally with his reign period. It is rather dated (300+319 or 320)=619 or 620 AD.

Of the Gupta rulers Chandragupta I was the first sovereign who introduced gold coins with a very high percentage of gold.[3] He was also the first to assume the sovereign title of *Mahārājādhīrāja* instead of *Mahārāja* (of his predecessors). We may, therefore, reasonably assume that he himself introduced that era and the period of Śrī-Gupta's reign as stated by I-Tsing is only an approximate guess work of dating.

All these facts, when put together, prove the correctness of Fleet's suggestion which is based on the account of Al-biruni that the Gupta era was separated from the Śaka era by an interval of 241 years (*i.e.*, 78+241=319 AD).

It is recorded in the Allahabad stone pillar inscription of Samudragupta[4] that among the assembled princes and other royal officials Chandragupta selected his son Samudragupta as his next successor. In his course of time, his son became a great conqueror and administrator. Apparently during the life time of his father he received proper training in the art of warfare as well as in civil administration from his able father Chandragupta I. Among his other achievements he first introduced the gold currency system which was continued by his successors. The Chandragupta-Kumāradevī type of gold coins have great social and religious values. On the obverse of the coins

[1]*Mysore Archaeological Report, 1923.*

[2]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 79; Goyal, *Indian Culture*, III, p. 379.

[3]Altekar, *Coinage*, p. 26:Maity, S.K., *Economic Life in Northern India in the Gupta Period*, p. 202, Appendix III.

[4]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 1; Sircar, *Select Ins.*, p. 254.

Chandragupta I offers apparently a marriage ring to his favourite queen Mahādevī. In one specimen A.S. Altekar has identified the object as a *"Sinduradāni."*[1] On the reverse of the coin Goddess Durgā (or Ambikā) is seated on a lion with a noose in her right hand and cornucopia in her left hand. This indicates that Chandragupta was the hot favourite of the goddess. He was, thus, a Brāhmaṇical Hindu, worshipping different Hindu gods and goddesses.

Śrī-Gupta was the mere founder of the Gupta dynasty in northern India; but his grand-son, Chandragupta I was the real founder of the great empire which lasted for more than two centuries in northern India. It can be said from a careful study of his gold coins that by his valour and sagacity he was able to introduce a prosperous reign.

V. A. Smith, A. S. Altekar and others[2] suggest that Chandragupta died at about 330 AD. But there is some difficulty in accepting this date. Chandragupta married Kumāradevī at about 319 AD, or 320 AD the year of his accession to the throne. Hence, at about 330 AD Samudragupta would be hardly 9 or 10 years old and this age was quite unsuitable for such a royal responsibility. It is reasonable to assume that he was, perhaps, chosen for the throne by his father not before 340 AD, when he might have reached an age of 20 years and might have started his career of conquests not before 345 AD. This assumption corresponds well with the contemporaneity of Samudragupta with king Meghavarṇa of Ceylon who ruled from 351 to 379 AD and who sent an ambassador to Samudragupta's Court. But in the opinion of H. C. Raychaudhuri, R. C. Majumdar and others Chandragupta I ascended the throne in AD 320 and strengthened his position by marrying Kumāradevī "at some stage of his career."[3]

Samudragupta

Samudragupta, the son and successor of Chandragupta I and Kumāradevī, was an accomplished prince. He is one of the greatest monarchs recorded in Indian history. The important sources

[1]Altekar, *Coinage*, p. 26.

[2]Smith, *EHI*, p. 297; Altekar, *Coinage*, p. 2.

[3]Majumdar and Pusalker, *The Classical Age*, p. 4, fn. 5; Raychaudhuri, *PHAI*, p. 537; Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 1; Sircar, *Select Ins.*, p. 254.

of information on his reign are his inscriptions and coins. They are the Allahabad Stone pillar inscription, Eran Stone Pillar inscription, Nālanda and Gayā spurious copper plates, and his Standard, Ārcher, Battle-axe, Aśvamedha, Tiger-slayer and Lyrist types of gold coins. Among them the Allahabad stone pillar inscription is "unique among Indian annals in its wealth of detail."[1] It was composed by the Sāndhivigrahika and Kumārāmātya, the Mahādaṇḍanāyaka Harisena," and inscribed by Mahādaṇḍnāyaka Tilabhaṭṭaka.[2] It gives a detailed account of his conquests and it enables us to form a clear idea of the extent of his empire and other achievements. Perhaps for the sake of literary beauty, Harisena had to sacrifice the chronological and geographical accuracy of the factual account. It is an undated record; apparently it was executed towards the later part of the reign, when Samudragupta had completed his conquests and other political engagements in and outside India.

The Allahabad Praśasti describes his selection to the throne by his father in the following words. "Samudragupta, whom his father embraced, saying, 'verily noble thou art,' with his hairs indicative of affection, standing erect, while the members of the court heard with joy (*Uchchhvasiteshu*) but princes of equal pedigree looked on with pale features (*Tulyakulajamlan-ānan-odvīkshitaḥ*), and then scanning him with eyes rolling with affection and laden with tears of joy and penetrating into his true nature, said, "Thou art worthy, protect the earth."[3]

Some scholars[4] think that there was a fratricidal war on the eve of his accession. But there is no reference to fratricidal war in the Allahabad Stone Pillar inscription. Most probably Harisena, the writer of the panegyric conceals a fratricidal war in order to preserve the sober and colourful picture of his master; but there is an expression, "*Tulyakulajamlan-ānan* (=princes of equal birth looked on with pale features)," indicating the displeasure of other princes of equal birth. It is also supported by the account of the Ārya-Mañjuśrī-Mūlakalpa which states that his younger brother Bhaśma, a man of low intelligence and

[1]Allan, *BMCGD*, p. XX.
[2]Fleet, p. 1; Sircar, p. 254.
[3]*Ibid*, pp. 6, 7-8.
[4]Chattopadhyaya, *EHNI*, p. 147; Goyal, S. R., *A History of the Imperial Guptas*, pp. 121-27.

wicked mind, occupied the throne for three days. It is, further, supplemented by the "Kācha"-type of gold coins. On the obverse of the coin, is found the legend "Kācha, having conquered the earth, is now conquering the heaven by his noble deeds," and on the reverse the goddess Lakshmī is shown with the legend "exterminator of all kings."[1] It is, held that Kācha of the coins and Bhaśma of the Ārya-Mañjuśrī-Mūlakalpa were the same person, as the meaning of both the names is ashes. Kācha alias Bhaśma contested with Samudragupta for the throne and managed to be on the Gupta throne for some months in defiance of the nominee of his father.[2]

But there is a great deal of controversy among scholars regarding the identity of Kācha.[3] According to A. S. Altekar, numismatic evidence makes it quite certain that Kācha coins are undoubtedly later in time than the Standard and Ārchar types of Samudragupta. We cannot, therefore, suppose that Kācha was a brother of Samudragupta who disputed his succession and was successful in ruling for a short time towards the beginning of the reign of Samudragupta. If Kācha was different from Samudragupta, as seems very probable, we must place him later than that of emperor, for the reverse of his coins undoubtedly presupposes the reverse of the Tiger-slayer type and the Aśvamedha type of coins of Samudragupta, which were both issued towards the end of the reign of that emperor.[4] However, the evidence of the Ārya-Mañjuśrī-Mūlakalpa is very vague and the evidence of fartricidal war is far-fetched. It cannot be given preference to the clear testimony of Allahabad Stone Pillar inscription of Samudragupta's peaceful accession to the throne in the presence of a host of joyous nobles and courtiers.

Samudragupta possessed an extraordinary military skill and was perhaps one of the greatest conquerors recorded in Indian

[1]Altekar, *Coinage*, pp. 87-89.

[2]Goyal, *HIG*, pp. 125-28.

[3](1) Kācha. a step brother of Śamudra Gupta by P. L. Gupta, *JNSI*, V, Part I, 1943 (2) Kācha problem solved, by P. L. Gupta, *IHQ*, XXII, No. 1, 1946 (3) Identity of Kācha Gupta, by A.S. Altekar, *JNSI*, IX, pt. II, 1947, p. 131 (4) Can Kācha be identified with Rāmagupta?, by P. L. Gupta, *JNSL*, XI, p. 33 and (5) A. S. Altekar's reply in the same journal.

[4]Altekar, *Coinage*, pp. 75-89.

history. For his numerous military achievements he was called by V.A. Smith as "Indian Napolean."[1] He was engaged "in a hundred battles" and received "wounds all over his body."[2] The Allahabad Stone Pillar inscription gives details of his campaigns and his other political engagements. For the sake of convenience we may classify them into five categories, *viz.*, (1) his conquests in *Uttarāpatha*, (2) his conquests of all the rulers of the forest states, (3) his campaigns in the *Dakshiṇāpatha*, (4) his relations with the frontier kings and tribal states and (5) his relations with the rulers of foreign countries. But it is not possible to narrate these events in a strict chronological order. It may be presumed that "the Indian Napoleon" first turned his arms against the kings of *Āryāvarta* who were nearest to his kingdom, before he embarked upon his perilous adventures in *Dakshiṇāpatha*. Many kings of northern India (*anek-Āryyāvartta-rājā*) were exterminated by Samudragupta, but only nine of them are recorded in the Allahabad stone pillar inscription: and their kingdoms were permanently annexed to his empire. They were the following:

"Rudradeva; Matila; Nāgadatta; Chandravarmana;
Gangapatināga; Nāgasena-Achuta; Nandi; Balavarman; ajy;
anek; Āryyāvartta; rājā."[3]

According to Manu, Āryāvartta is bounded by the Himālayas in the north, the Vindhya and the Eastern sea (Bay of Bengal) in the south and the Western Sea (Arabian sea) in the west. However, at the present state of our knowledge, it is very difficult to identify all the nine states of northern India. Dikshit identifies Rudradeva with Rudrasena of the Vākāṭaka dynasty. But this seems improbable, as the Vākāṭakas belonged to *Dakshiṇāpatha* and not to *Āryāvarta*.[4]

Matila may be identified with the Mattila of a seal found in Bulandshahr district of Uttar Pradesh. But Nāgadatta, Balavarman and Nandin cannot be properly identified at present. H.P. Sastri wrongly identifies Chandravarman with king Chandra of the Meherauli Iron Pillar inscription. V.A. Smith,

[1]Smith, *EHI*, p. 299.
[2]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 1.
[3]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 7 (l. 21).
[4]Sircar, *Select Ins.*, pp. 256-58 fn.; Chattopadhyaya, *EHNI*, pp. 152-62; Fleet, *CII*, III, pp. 1-18.

H.C. Raychaudhuri, R.G. Basak and others identify him with Chandravarman of Susunia hill inscription of the Bankura district in West Bengal.[1]

Ganapatināga is no doubt the same as Ganapati of the Nāga family whose coins have been found from Narwar and Besnagar. But according to the *Harshacharita* of Bānabhaṭṭa, Nāgasena belonged to the Nāga family of Padmāvatī; and Ganapatināga perhaps belonged to the same Nāga house. Some suggest that he may have been a member of the royal house of Vidisā. V.A. Smith and Rapson place Achuta in the royal house of Mathurā; for some copper and bronze coins with the legend "a-chu" have been found from the Barelli district of Uttar Pradesh.[2]

He, then, reduced all the kings of all the forest states (*sarva-Āṭavika-rājya*) to complete subjection. They comprised most probably the region lying between Mirzapur district of Uttar Pradesh and the Central Province including hilly tracts and forests, the whole of Chotanagpur and the major parts of the Vindhyas. The conquest of these regions is further proved by the Eran inscription of Samudragupta.[3]

After completing his conquest in northern India, he apparently marched against the kings of the *Dakshiṇāpatha*. It was a daring expedition brilliantly conducted by him; as many as twelve kings of the south fell under his arms one after another, They were the following:

> "Kauśalaka; Mehenda; Mahākāntāraka; Vyāghrarāja; Kaura; Laka; Mantarāja; Paishṭapuraka; Mahendragiri; Kauṭṭuraka; Svāmidatta; Eiraṇḍapallaka; Damana; Kāñcheyaka; Vishṇugopa; Āvāmuktāka; Nilarāja; Vaiṅgeyaka; Hastivarmma; Pālakka; Ograsena; Daivarāṣṭraka; Kubera; Kausthalapuraka; Dhanañjaya; Prabhṛiti; Sarvva; Dakshiṇāpatha; Rājā; Grahaṇa; Mokshānugraha; Janita; Pratap; Onmiśramāhāghagyasya...."[4]

(I) Kośala is identified with South-Kośala, comprising the modern districts of Bilaspur, Raipur and Sambalpur. But nothing is known about Mahendra. (II) Vyaghrarāja ruled in the

[1]Sircar, *Select Ins.*, pp. 256-58 fn.; Chattopadhyaya, *EHNI*, pp. 152-62; Fleet, *CII*, III, pp. 1-18.

[2]*Ibid.*

[3]*Ibid.*

[4]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 7 (l. 19-20); *Ibid.*

Jaipur forest of Orissa which is referred to as Mahāvana, a synonym for Mahākāntāra in an old inscription. He is, also, identified with Vyāghradeva, a feudatory of the Vākāṭaka Pṛithvisena of the Nachna and Ganj inscriptions. (III) Mantrarāja probably ruled Kollair Lake near Ellore in the Godāvarī district. (IV) Pishṭapura is identified with Godavari district in Maḍras Presidency. (V) Koṭṭura is possibly Kothoor in Ganjam district. (VI) Eraṇḍapalla is identified with modern Erandapalli, a town near Chicacole in Vizagapattam district. (VII) Kāñchi is modern Konjeeveram district in Madras. Vishṇugopa was one of the Pallava rulers of Kāñchi. (VIII) The identification of Āvāmuktaka is not certain. Most probably it lies somewhere in the eastern part of the Peninsula. (IX) Veṅgi is the modern village of Veṅgi in the Krishna district. (X) Palakka may be Palakkada in the Nellore district. (XI) Devarāshṭra is the Yellamannchili region of the Vizagapattam district. (XII) Kusthalapura may be Kuttalur in North Arcot district.[1]

From the above identification it appears that his southern campaigns were confined to the eastern part of the Deccan. J. Dubreuil, then, suggests that Samudragupta had to face a joint opposition of the rulers of eastern Deccan near the Colair Lake, and having been repulsed he had to return home.[2] But from the Allahabad Praśasti we know definitely that his victorious army reached Kāñchi in the far south and, thus, we cannot support the view of J. Dubreuil. S. Levi has suggested that from the second century AD many good ports were founded on the eastern coast of Deccan and Samudragupta wanted them under his control.[3] Thus, his control over the eastern Deccan and the forest states of Madhyapradesh might have helped him to check the Vākāṭaka expansion in those areas.[4] It is, however, difficult to explain, why Samudragupta returned only after his conquests on the east coast. It may be that he was discomfited by a confederacy of South Indian Kings or that fresh troubles in North India brought him back home.[5] In his conquest of Deccan he

[1]*Select Ins.*, p. 257, fn 1. *Ibid.*

[2]Debrueil, J., *Ancient History of the Deccan*, pp. 60-1.

[3]Levi, Ptolemy, Niddesa and Bṛihatkathā, tr. P. C. Bagchi, *Sino-Indian Studies*, II, 1946, p. 61.

[4]Chattopadhyaya, *ENHI*, p. 151.

[5]*Indian Culture*, p. 99 (A. S. Altekar).

followed the ideal of "*dharma-vijaya*." At first he defeated the rulers but then re-instated them in their own kingdoms; and that shows the political sagacity of Samudragupta. He, being a northern king, probably realised the futility of annexing permanently the southern states, and was content with receiving the humble submission of the vanquished princes and bringing home a large store of golden treasure.

So great was the terror inspired by his arms that the frontier states both in the east and the west also submitted to him. Their rulers paid him tribute and homage. They were the rulers of Samataṭa, Davāka, Kāmarūpa, Nepāla and Kārtṛipura. Samataṭa was in south-east Bengal; and the chief city of Davāka has been identified by N. K. Bhattasali with modern Dabāk in Naogong district of Assam. The country, thus, corresponds to the valley of the Kapili-Yamuna-Kolang rivers. Kāmarūpa is the Gauhati region of Assam and Kārtṛipura seems to have comprised Katārpur in Jalandhar district and the Katuria-rāj of Kumaun, Garhwal and Rohilkhand.[1]

The fear of his arms was such that as many as nine tribal states of Rajputana and Punjab did him homage and paid him tribute. They were the following:

"Mālava-Arjunāyana-Yaudheya-Madraka-Ābhira-Prārjuna-Sanakānika-Kāka-Kharapārika-ādibhiś=cha......"[2]

The tribal states of Rajputana and Punjab, such as, (I) the Mālavas (in east Rajputana), (II) the Arjunāyanas (in the eastern part of the Jaipur and the Alwar state), (III) Yaudheyas (Johiyabar on the banks of the Sutlej), (IV) the Madrakas or Madras (territory between the Ravi and the Chinab with their capital at Sialkot), (V) the Sanakānikas (near Bhilsa), (VI) the Ābhiras (of central India), (VII), Prārjunas, (VIII) Kākas (of Kākanādaboṭa of Sāñcāi region) and (IX) the Kharapārikas (some where in Rajputana),[3] professed submission of their own accord and apparently paid him tribute. Although they were not included in his dominion, they were in many respects under the political influence of his imperial Majesty.

Samudragupta had diplomatic relations with the Śaka princes of Western India and the Kushāṇa King of the North-Western

[1]Sircar, *Select Ins.*, p. 258; fn. 1; Bhāratbarsha, B. S., 1348, p. 90.
[2]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 8 (l. 22).
[3]Sircar, *Select Ins.*, p. 258, fn. I.

Frontier and Kabul. The Kushāṇa king, *(Daivaputra-Śāhi-Śāhānu-Sāhi)*, a descendant of the Great Kushāṇa rulers, recognised his imperial power by sending him rich presents. Moreover, the king, Meghavarṇa of Ceylon and the kings of "all island" countries were "effected by the acts of respectful service, such as, offering themselves as sacrifices, bringing presents of maidens, (giving) Garuḍa-tokens (surrendering) the enjoyment of their own territories, soliciting (his commands.)"[1] These foreign rules, thus, acknowledged the suzerainty of Samudragupta.

The island countries generally are identified as the Malaya Peninsula, Jāvā, Sumātrā, perhaps, some other islands of the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean. But many of them are conventionally recorded in the Allahabad *Praśasti* and may not have had anything to do with the Great Gupta ruler. It is, however, recorded in the Buddhist sources that Meghavarṇa of Ceylon sent a mission to Samudragupta with rich presents and asked his permission to build a monastery at Bodh-Gaya for the Buddhist monks of Ceylon. It was subsequently granted by him. Moreover, it is very probable that the foreign rulers realised the great military power of the Gupta king and thought it wise to cultivate good relations with him by paying personal visits or by establishing marriage relations. He, thus, established very friendly relations with the foreign countries which maintained commercial and cultural relations with him.

His empire comprised almost the whole of the most fertile and populous regions of northern India. It included the territories bounded by the Brahmaputra river in the east, the Yamunā and the Chambal in the West, the Himalayas in the north and the Narmada river in the south. Beyond these limits he politically influenced the tribal states of Rajputana and Punjab and the kingdoms of Nepal, Kārtripura, Samataṭa, Davāka and Kāmarūpa. Thus, almost the whole of the *Āryāvarta* came under his direct rule and he forced at least twelve kingdoms of the south to acknowledge his paramountcy. This is undoubtedly a great achievement of which a few monarchs of the sub-continent can boast of, and thus, his Allahabad *Praśasti* clearly states that he was inspired by the

[1]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 8 (C. 23-24).

Hindu ideal of the *Rāja-chakravartin* (or Universal sovereignty) which was perhaps popular in that age. But in practice it signifies the establishment of overlordship over the whole of Bhāratavarsha.[1] In order to celebrate his universal supremacy Samudragupta performed a great horse sacrifice.[2] Since the Allahabad *Praśasti* does not mention the sacrifice, it was perhaps performed in the later part of his reign. It was long in abeyance since the days of Pushyamitra Suṅga.

Samudragupta issued the Asvamedha type of gold coins in order to give them as fees to the conducting priests and others. From a study of his gold coins it can be said that he was a follower of Vishṇu and Lakshmī. Only in his Tiger-Slayer type of gold coins, the goddess Gaṅgā is seated on a Makara (Crocodile).[3] He was, thus, a Brāhmaṇical Hindu worshipping different Hindu gods and goddesses; he was also tolerant to Buddhism and Jainism. He granted permission to the Ceylonese King, Meghavarṇa, to construct a monastery at Bodh-Gayā; he also donated a few villages for its maintenance. It is also believed that the celebrated Buddhist author, Vasubandhu received his patronage.

During his reign the whole of northern India enjoyed internal peace and security which certainly helped the development of a prosperous internal and foreign trade.[4] His westward drive was largely inspired by the desire to occupy the coastal region of Saurashtra, which was engaged in a rich trade with the West.[5] His large number of gold coins also testify to this conclusion; he issued as many as six types of good gold coins.[6]

Apart from his political and military skill, Samudragupta was an accomplished scholar, poet and musician. If we believe the account of the Allahabad stone Pillar inscription, he "put to shame the preceptor (Kāsyapa) of (Indra) the lord of gods, and Tumburu and Nārada, and others, by (his) sharp and polished intellect and choral skill and musical accomplishments."[7] That

[1]Sircar, *Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Mediaeval India*, p. 1.
[2]Altekar, *Coinage*, p. 61.
[3]*Ibid*, p. 69.
[4]Maity, *ELGP*, pp. 134-40.
[5]*Ibid*
Altekar, *Coinage*, pp. 41-73.
[7]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 8 (l. 27).

he was a great musician is also attested to by his Lyrist type of gold coins.[1] On the obverse of this coin, he is shown playing on his lyre. He also took delight in the society of learned men and is said to have composed numerous poems of high merit and earned the title of the king of poets *Kavi-rāja*.[2] But we have no such poem at our disposal.

Samudragupta was endowed with the qualities of head and heart. Very often he was compassionate to "the miserable, the poor, the helpless and the afflicted" and "was the giver of many hundreds of thousands of cows."[3] Also, "he re-established many royal families, fallen and deprived of sovereignty," and "his officers were always employed in restoring the wealth of the various kings conquered by him."[4] On the whole he was "Varuṇa in justice, Indra in valour, invincible like Antaka (Yama), a Bṛihaspati in sharp and penetrating intellect, the hope of the good (Sādhu) and the destroyer of the wicked."[5]

Samudragupta enjoyed a fairly long reign extending from *c*. 340 AD to 375 AD.

KĀCHAGUPTA AND RĀMAGUPTA THEORY

Kāchagupta

There is a great deal of controversy among Indologists regarding the identification of Kāchagupta. He is only konwn to us from his five gold coins; and we have discussed this problem above. Here, we shall analyse the same problem in connection with Rāmagupta.

From the point of view of pure gold content the following coins may be grouped into five categories.

(1) Vāsudeva coins—118 grains.
(2) The Chandragupta-Kumāradevī coins—109 grains.
(3) The Archer, Tiger and Lyrist coins of Samudragupta—104-5 grains.
(4) The Standard, Battle-axe, Aśvamedha coins of Samudragupta, Kācha and Ārcher coins of Chandragupta II—98-99 grains.

[1]Altekar, *Coinage*, p. 73.
[2]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 1.
[3]*Ibid*, p. 8 (1.23-26).
[4]*Ibid.*
[5]*Ibid.*

(5) The Ārcher coins of Kumāragupta I—92 grains.

It can be tentatively suggested that they were issued in the same chronological order on the principle of Gresham's Law. This points to the fact that the "Chandragupta-Kumāradevī" coins, as A. S. Altekar believes, were issued by Chandragupta I himself and not by Samudragupta.[1]

The "Kācha" coins, if issued by Samudragupta at all, were issued, like his Aśvamedha coins, towards the end of his reign, when his power was at its highest. But it is unlikely that they are his, for it is on the face of it improbable that he gave up his throne-name and reverted to a popular name, when at the height of his power. It can, thus, be conjectured that the Kācha coins were not issued by Samudragupta, but by an usurper. According to K. P. Jayaswal Kācha and Rāma are two different names of the same king. D. R. Bhandarkar further suggests that the name of Rāmagupta, which occurs only once in the "Devī-Chandragupta," is a mis-reading of Kāchagupta, the real name of the king. He may have had his nick-name as Kāchagupta and the Kācha gold coins can be attributed to Rāmagupta.

Rāmagupta

Among the many sons[2] of *Mahārājādhirāja* Samudragupta, Chandragupta II was selected (*tatparigrhita*) by his father as his next successor to the throne for his remarkable ability or because he was the son of his favourite queen Dattadevī. His Mathura Pillar inscription of the Gupta era 61 was issued by Chandragupta II in his fifth regnal year *(vijaya-rajyasamvatsare panchame)*[3] which corresponds to (61+319+5=) 375 AD.

But "after the discovery[4] of some passages from the lost drama, Devi Chandraguptam" by Viśakhadatta, the idea of his peaceful accession to the throne has been questioned. According to it Rāmagupta, the elder brother of Chandragupta II, was the immediate successor of Samudragupta. Rāmagupta, a coward and impotent king, agreed to surrender his queen Dhruvadevī to a Śaka king who had defeated him. But his younger brother, Chandragupta II went to the camp of the Śaka invader in

[1]Maity, *ELGP*, p. 202.
[2]Eran Inscription (1.19-20); Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 20.
[3]Sircar, *Select Ins.*, pp. 260-62.
[4]*JA*, *CCIII*, p. 201.

disguise as the queen and killed him. He, then, returned to his capital and killing Rāmagupta, married Dhruvādevī and ascended the throne.

S. Levi places Viśākhadatta between the Gupta Period and Harsha.[1] Others are not prepared to believe this story and like to treat it as purely a literary account. But for the following reasons it is very difficult for us to leave it as such, for that story in some form or other has been handed down from generation to generation. It is recorded in the *Harsha charita* of Bānabhaṭṭa, the *Kāvyamīmāṁsā* of Rājaśekhara and the Sanjan, the Cambay, the Sangli copper plates of the Rashtṛakūṭa rulers.[2] Moreover, one Arabic work, translated into Persian by Abdul Hasan, states that when king Rawal (Rāmagupta) was faced with an invasion of his kingdom, he proposed to surrender his own queen to the invader. His brother Barkmaris (Vikramādity) in the guise of the queen went to the camp of the invader and killed him. Later on, Barkmaris killed Rawal and married his widowed queen and it is claimed to have been originally a Hindu episode.[3]

The literary account is further substantiated by the discovery of ten copper coins of Rāmagupta;[4] and all have been discovered from Malwa. A. S. Altekar identifies Rāmagupta with the "elder brother of Chandragupta II mentioned in the Devī-Chandraguptam."[5] But, according to D. C. Sircar, he was a local ruler of Malwa and he "issued coins in imitation of the imperial Gupta money on the decline of the Guptas about the close of the fifth century AD."[6] This assumption, however, fails to explain the literary evidence as well as the traditional popularity of the episode. It is, thus, suggested by S. R. Goyal[7] that Rāmagupta was the governor of eastern Malwa during the life time of his father, Samudragupta. Chandragupta II, on the other hand,

[1]Chattopadhyaya, *EHNI*, p. 164, fn.

[2]Altekar, *JBORS*, XIV, p. 22; Chattopadhyaya, K. C., *Bhandarkar Commemoration Volume*, p. 118.

[3]Elliot and Dowson, *The History of India as Told by its own Historians*, I, p. 110.

[4]Altekar, *Coinage*, pp. 162-64; Gupta, P.L., *JNSI*, XII, pp. 103-08; Trivedi, H.V., *JNSI*, XIII, p. 128.

[5]*Ibid.*

[6]Sircar, *JIH*, XL, pt. III, p. 533.

[7]Goyal, *HIG*, pp. 231-37.

managed to secure the rest of the empire from his father. After the death of their father the Śakas invaded Malwa which was saved by Chandragupta II who later on killed Rāmagupta and married his wife Dhruvadevī. It is very near the truth of the Rāmagupta episode.

Chandragupta II

Samudragupta selected Chandragupta II[1] as his next successor to the throne at about 375 AD. We are familiar with his career and achievements from his Mathurā Pillar inscription, Udayagiri cave inscription, Śañchi Stone inscription, Gadhwa Stone inscription, Meharauli Iron pillar inscription of king Chandra (=Chandragupta II) and from his Ārcher, Lion-slayer, Horseman Chhatra, Couch, King and Queen on Couch, Standard, Chakravikrama types of gold coins and his silver and copper coins. It is further supplemented by the account of the Chinese pilgrim, Fa-hien who visited India during his reign, and by the literary works of the Great Sanskrit poet and writer Kālidāsa who is believed to have been his contemporary. Some side light is also thrown by such literary works as the *Devī-Chandraguptam* and Bāṅa's *Harshacharita.*

Matrimonial alliances had played an important part in the foreign policy of the Guptas. Chandragupta I had married the Lichchhavī princess, Kumāradevī and with the help of the Lichchhavīs he was able to establish independent political power clan over Magadha. Similarly, his grandson Chandragupta II married Kuberanāgā, a princess of the famous Nāga house of Padmāvatī or of Mathurā. The Nāgas "were a powerful ruling clan and a marriage alliance with them might have been of great use to Chandragupta in consolidating the newly established imperial position of the Guptas."[2] We have already seen that his father, Samudragupta fought and defeated Gaṇapatināga and Nāgasena.[3] As a result of this marriage, Prabhāvatī Guptā was born; and in course of time she was given in marriage to the Vākāṭaka king, Rudrasena II by her father Chandragupta II. Rudrasena II had a very short reign and after his death, Prabhāvatī Guptā

[1]Raychaudhuri, *PHAI.*
[2]Majumdar and Altekar, *VGA*, p. 189.
[3]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 1. (Allahabad Stone Pillar Inscription).

acted as the regent of her minor sons, Divākarasena, Damodarasena and Pravākarasena II for more than twenty years.[1] It, thus, remained under the direct political influence of Chandragupta II. The Vākāṭaka king occupied the south western flank of the Gupta empire and a Vākāṭaka king "could be of much service or disservice to the northern invader of the dominions of the "Śaka Satraps of Gujarat and Saurashtra."[2] By this way, Chandragupta II adopted a prudent precaution in giving his daughter in marriage to the Vākāṭaka king and the Vākāṭakas helped substantially in his Śaka war.

The marriage alliances of Chandragupta II were a diplomatic prelude to his imperial expansion in western India. Though the Allahabad stone pillar inscription[3] of Samudragupta clearly refers to some sort of political control exercised by that emperor over the Śakas of western India, it was quite natural that the Śaka Satraps did not accept this position for good without struggle. There might have been a long-drawn warfare. According to the drama, *Devī-Chandragupta*, Rāshṭrakūṭa inscriptions and *Harshacharita*, Chandragupta II, in disguise of the queen, Dhruvadevī, killed the Śaka invader. This might be taken as Chandragupta II's first blow against the Śakas. His accession to the throne of Magadha was the signal for renewal of warfare between him and the western Śaka satraps of Gujarat-Kathiawad region. Several factors were responsible for this remarkable war.

S. R. Goyal[4] suggests that from the geographical point of view, western India with its capital at Ujjaini was a valuable accession to the Gupta empire. Chandragupta II (Vikramāditya) had assumed the title of "*Ujjayinī-puravara-adhiśvara*," the lord of Ujjaini, the best of cities. According to the *Kāvya Mīmāmsā*, Sahasanka of Ujjain ordered the exclusive use of Sanskrit in his harem.[5] Here, we can refer to the observation of K. M. Panikkar.[6] He states about the geography of the Mughal conquest,

[1]Poona and Rithpur Copper-Plates of Prabhavatigupta, Sircar, *Select Ins.*, pp. 41-47; Majumdar and Pusalker, *The Classical Age*, pp. 180-82.

[2]Smith, *JRAS*, 1914, p. 324.

[3]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 2.

[4]Goyal, *HIG*, pp. 220-23.

[5]Raychaudhuri, *PHAI*, p. 555, fn 12.

[6]Panikkar, K.M., *Geographical Factors in Indian History*, p. 80.

"from Ferganah to Kabul, from Kabul to Agra and with Agra the Gangetic Valley, under Akbar the empire is consolidated; Bengal is firmly held, a lightening campaign annexes Gujarat... Then begins the struggle against the Deccan." Pushpagupta was the governor of Chandragupta Maurya in the Junagarh region in the west.[1] Thus, after consolidating his position over the Gangetic valley, Samudragupta extended his power over eastern Malwa which resulted in the peaceful acceptance of Samudragupta as the suzerain of the Śakas of western India. The princes of royal blood were appointed as governors of the westernmost provinces. Thus, due to the strategic position of Malwa and its environs or because of the local tradition of tribal autonomy of this place, the Gupta emperors appointed princes with some sort of administrative authority as governors. Rāmagupta was, perhaps, appointed governor there by his father Samudragupta and he issued copper coins in his name perhaps during the life time of his father.[2] "This unusual position of Malwa did not change much even after Chandragupta II had conquered the Śakas and had brought Gujarat under his direct administrative control; for, it seems almost certain that Govindagupta, the son of Chandragupta II, was for sometime the viceroy of western Malwa, most probably during the life-time of the latter, and Ghaṭotkachagupta, another royal prince, probably a son of Kumāragupta I, was accorded the same status in eastern Malwa with its headquarters at Tumbavana in the second quarter of the fifth century."[3]

Samudragupta had large military conquests to his credit and performed Aśvamedha sacrifice to proclaim his supremacy over northern India. Just to establish his fame as the great king of kings (*Parama-bhaṭṭāraka-Mahārājādhirāja*) and to prove himself as a great military genius like his father, Chandragupta II must have numerous conquest to his credit. He had already inherited a big empire extending upto eastern Malwa from his father; and as a natural corollary he must have the whole of western India within his dominion. If we believe the theory of

[1]Junagarh Rock Inscription of Rudradaman I, *Epigraphica Indica*, VIII, p. 42.

[2]Altekar, *Coinage*, p. 162.

[3]Goyal, *HIG*, p. 223.

[4]*Ibid.*, p. 242.

the Śaka's war with Rāmagupta, he had already killed a Śaka chief in disguise of Dhruvādevī. He had, thus, no friendly relation with the Śakas who might have cherished the same desire of attacking the Gupta empire from the west and of extending their empire at the cost of the Imperial Guptas. Moreover, after the premature death of his son-in-law, Rudrasena II, Prabhāvatī Guptā had to run the administration on behalf of her minor sons, Divākarasena and Pravarasena II for more than twenty years. The Śaka empire was very near her territory; and the growth and development of the Śaka power in the west was, perhaps, considered by Chandragupta II as a constant threat to the safety of her daughter's life and kingdom. Over and above, he had the desire "to put an end to the hated Scythian yoke on the western parts of the country." V. A. Smith also observes, "we may feel assured that differences of race, creed, and manners supplied the Gupta monarch with special reason for desiring to suppress the impure foreign rulers of the west."[1] But, against the view of Smith, it can be said that acting and re-acting against the growth and development of a foreign power was purely a nineteenth century phenomenon. This concept originated in Europe as a result of the Great French Revolution of 1789 AD. Even the Muslim invaders in the later period were not treated in that strict sense of the term. Other political and economic reasons were predominant factors in crushing the power of the "Śakas in western India. And they were not driven out from India as foreigners but were gradually absorbed into the Hindu society. The annexation of western India gave him free access to the ports of western sea coast and placed him directly in touch with the lucrative trade with the west.[2] Vṛigukachchhaya (mod. Broach) and other ports of western India not only used to export their home products, but also various other products of central Asia and China.[3]

The details of the campaign are not known to us. But there are positive evidences that Chandragupta II with his feudatory chiefs, ministers of war and peace and a vast army had to make

[1]Smith, *EHI*, p. 309.
[3]Maity, *ELGP*.
[2]Wheeler, *Rome Beyond the Imperial Frontiers*, p. 164; Priaulx, *The Indian Travels of Apollonius of Tyna and the Indian Embassies to Rome*, p. 252.

a prolonged stay at Malwa. It is indirectly referred to in three inscriptions, *viz.* the Udayagiri cave inscription of Vīrasena Sāba, a native of Pāṭaliputra and his minister of war and peace. He came here accompanied by the king in person, who was seeking to conquer the whole world[1]; another Udayagiri cave inscription of the Sanakānika Mahārāja,[2] a feudatory chief of the same locality and a high military official Amrakārdava by name from Sānchi[3] accompanied him in the battlefield.

His success was, complete. The Śaka ruler Rudrasena III was not only defeated but his kingdom was annexed by Chandragupta.[4] The evidence of the inscriptions in this respect is corroborated by coins. The Śaka coins which had been current in this region suddenly came to an end between 388 and 397 AD and were replaced by silver coins of similar design issued by Chandragupta II. "This leaves no room for doubt that Chandragupta II extinguished the power of the western Kshatrapas and annexed their dominions." There is also an allusion in the Harsha-charita of Bāṇa to the conquest of the Śaka territory. Sir R.G. Bhandarkar glorifies Chandragupta with the title of Vikramāditya-Śakāri, (*i.e.* the destroyer of the Śakas of Ujjaini).

"When Malwa, Gujarat and Kathiawad were annexed with the Gupta empire by Chandragupta II, he found that his new subjects were accustomed to the use of small silver hemidrachms. Eventually he had to decide to use a silver currency of his own, more or less similar to that popularised in western India by the Kshatrapas, whom he had overthrown."[5]

Ujjaini was a great centre of ancient culture, and it was perhaps the home of the great poet Kālidāsa. For all these reasons, Chandragupta II established his second capital at Ujjaini and assumed the title of "*Ujjaini-Puravara-Adhiśvara*" and "*Pāṭaliputra-Puravara-Adhiśvara.*" Moreover, the incorporation of the whole of Malwa, Saurashtra, Kathiawad and Gujarat "not only added to the empire provinces of exceptional wealth and

[1]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 36.
[2]*Ibid*, p. 25.
[2]Sanchi Inscription of Chandragupta II, Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 29.
[4]Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey Reports*, X, p. 127; *JRAS*, 1889, p. 122.
[5]Altekar, *Coinage*, p. 150.

fertility, but opened up the paramount power free access to the ports of the Western coast; and thus placed Chandragupta II in direct touch with the seaborne commerce with Europe through Egypt . . . . ."[1]

Chandragupta II had other successful military exploits to his credit. Vīrasena Sāba, his minister of war and peace, states that "the emperor set out to conquer the whole world."[2] His general Amrakārdava is said to have won glory by winning many battles.[3] We have, however, no definite information regarding the nature and results of these campaigns. But the military exploits of king Chandra are recorded in his Meharauli Iron Pillar inscription.[4] King Chandra is generally identified with Chandragupta II of the Imperial Gupta dynasty of Magadha. He led some victorious campaigns in the eastern and the western frontiers of his empire. It is recorded that "he, on whose arm fame was inscribed by the sword, when, in battle in the Vaṅiga countries, he kneaded (and turned) back with (his) breast the enemies who, uniting together, came against (him);—he, by whom, having crossed in warfare the seven mouths of the (river) Sindhu, the Vālhikas were conquered, ..." According to Kālidāsa,[5] Vaṅga country denotes region lying between the Bhāgirathi and the Padmā, Samataṭa and Davāka, which formed a part of the Vaṅga country, acknowledged the suzerainty of Samudragupta.[6] They were also known as *pratyanta* (frontier) states. Evidently, some of the rulers of these states refused to acknowledge the supremacy of his son, Chandragupta II, who subsequently brought them under his sway, it was done possibly towards the close of his reign.

After crossing the seven mouths of the river Sindhu, he defeated the Vālhikas. They can be identified with Bālkh (Bactria) beyond the Hindukush mountain.[7] We have no more definite or detailed account of the only recorded military expedition of an Indian king after Chandragupta Maurya in the remote region

[1]Smith, *EHI*, pp. 307-08.
[2]Udayagiri Cave Inscription of Chandragupta II, Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 34.
[3]Sanchi Stone Inscription of Chandragupta II, Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 29.
[4]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 139.
[5]*Raghuvamsa*, IV, 36.
[6]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 1; Sircar, *Select Ins.*, p. 254.
[7]*Ibid.*

outside India.[1] It is quite possible that Chandragupta II fought against the remnants of the Great Kushāṇas who ruled in this region; and he was able to establish his authority on a firmer basis.

The Gupta empire reached the zenith of extension during his rule and like his father he was a great conqueror. It extended from the Arabian sea in the west to the Bay of Bengal in the east, and from the Himalayas in the north to the Vindhya mountains in the south. Through his daughter's marriage with the Vākāṭaka king, he also exercised a powerful influence at the Vākāṭaka court.

Chandragupta II was the pivot of administration and assured very high sounding titles, such as, *Paramabhaṭṭāraka*, *Paramabhāgavata*, *Mahārājādhirāja*, *Śrī-Vikrama*, etc. He ruled by hereditary descent but with divine dispensation and often considered himself as "a god on earth." He was the head of the state and all powers, executive, legislative, judicial and military emanated from him.

In administrative matters, he was always assisted by a group of high ministers, and other officials. They were *Mantrins* (ministers), *Mahādaṇḍanāyaka* (chief justice), *Mahāsenāpati* (commander-in-chief), *Mahāsandhi-Vigrahika* (minister of war and peace), *Akshapaṭalā-dhikrita* (head of the record keeper's department), etc. It is nearly impossible to obtain a clear idea about all the Gupta officials mentioned in epigraphic records and literary works. However, there can be no doubt that the administration was divided into distinct departments, each under a high official who managed the affairs of his department with carefully graded assistant officials. Moreover, Fa-hien states, "The king governs without decapitation or other corporal punishments. Criminals are simply fined, lightly or heavily, according to the circumstances of each case. Even in case of repeated attempts at naked rebellion they only have their right hands cut off. The king's bodyguards and attendants all have salaries."

There was no clear-cut division between the civil and military officials; the same person could hold both civil and military posts.[2] But the most enlightened feature of his administration

[1]Smith, *EHI*, pp. 121-26.
[2]Gupta Administration, *JAS*, 1959.

was that no distinction was made on the score of religion and sects. Although he was a devout Vaishṇava, many of his high officials were Buddhists and Śaivas. He, thus, followed the principle of keeping careers open to talents.

A large number of clay seals have been discovered by Bloch from the Basarh region[1]; and they give us an idea of the administrative system of Chandragupta II. The legend of one of the seals is "*Mahādevī* Dhruvasvāminī, queen of *Mahārājādhirāja* Chandragupta II, and mother of *Mahārāja* Govindagupta." Evidently, Govindagupta was the governor of Tirabhukti (or Tira) during the reign of his father. It, reminds us of the Maurya practice of appointing princes of royal blood as governors of provinces. These seals also record a large number of officials of the provincial governments which has been listed by R. K. Mookerjee in the following manner.[2]

1. *Uparika,* governor of the Province, as in Tirabhukti-*uparika-adhikaraṇa.*
2. *Kamārāmātyadhikaraṇa,* office of the Princes' Ministers. The officer *Kumārāmatya* is given the curious title of *Yuvarāja* or *Bhaṭṭāraka* signifying the chief of the Princes' Ministers.
3. *Balādhikaraṇa,* office of the Head of the Army who also bears the title of *Yuvarāja* and *Bhaṭṭāraka.*
4. *Raṇabhandādhikaraṇa,* the Military Exchequer.
5. *Daṇḍapasadhikaraṇa,* office of the chief of the police.
6. *Mahādaṇḍanāyaka,* Chief Justice.
7. *Vinayasthiti-Sthāpaka,* Office of Minister in-charge of Law and Order.
8. *Bhatasvapati,* Head of the Infantry and Cavalry.
9. *Mahāpratihāra,* Chief Chamberlain.
10. *Vinayasura,* Chief Censor.
11. *Talavara,* . . . . (? General or Chief).

The enumeration of these officers and offices shows that the Gupta system of provincial and municipal administration was comprehensive and well-regulated.

Pāṭaliputra was the seat of government under Chandragupta I, Samudragupta, Chandragupta II, Kumāragupta I and others. It was already famous in northern India from the time of the

[1]Basarh excavation by Bloch, *ASIR,* 1903-4, p. 107.
[2]*The Gupta Empire*, p. 50.

Mauryas. Megasthenes, Fa-hien, Hiuen-Tsang and others have left a very interesting account of Pāṭalīputra. After so many years Fa-hien was astonished to see the royal palaces of Aśoka. They "where all made by spirits which he employed, and which he piled up the stones, reared the walls and gates, and executed the elegant carving and inlaid sculpture work in a way which no human hand of this world can accomplish." This shows that the buildings of Aśoka were perfectly in tact even after about five hundred years and they were so imposing and beautiful that the Chinese pilgrim could not believe them to be the work of human hand. But for the political and economic need of the time Chandragupta II established another seat of government at Ujjaini. He, then, assumed the title of "*Ujjayini-Puravara-adhisvara*" and "*Pāṭaliputra-Puravara-adhisvara*"[1] (*i.e.* the chief Lord of the cities of Ujjaini and Pāṭliputra). According to Fa-hien the principal port of his empire on the east coast was Tāmralipti (Tamluk), from which ships set sail for Ceylon, Sumatra, Java and China.[2]

Moreover, the rapid economic growth during the reign of Samudragupta and his son and successor, Chandragupta II "was concomitant with urban development. In the literary works of the Gupta period[3] and sometimes even in the inscriptions[4] we find graphic descriptions of the life and conditions of many of the metropolitan centres of the empire, *viz.* Dāsapura, Ujjayinī, Mathurā, Padmāvatī, Prayāga, Kauśāmbī, Vārāṇasī, Pāṭaliputra, etc. The cultural life of these cities was marked by spectacular variety and luxury, colour and gaiety, fashion and taste. They are usually described as full of lofty buildings, crowded bazars and jamming multitudes and as peopled by rich philanthrophists, lovers of arts and crafts, talented and cultivated women and cultured and well-behaved millionaires. Clubs *(goshtis)*, drinking parties *(apanakas)*, picnics *(yātras)*, festive gatherings *(samājas)* and garden-parties *(Udyāna yātras)* occupied an important place in the life of the wealthy citizen. One of the

[1]Chattopadhyaya, *EHNI*, p. 172.

[2]Legge, James, *Records of Buddhistic Kingdoms*, p. 100.

[3]Ray Chaudhuri, *PHAI*, p. 556. and Buddha Prakash, *Aspects of Indian History and Civilization*, p. 22.

[4]Mandasor Inscription of Kumar Gupta I and Bandhuvarman (Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 84) Description of Dāsapura.

natural consequences of his increasing degree of luxury in the life of the people was the growth of a pleasure-seeking psychology and ease-loving outlook."[1]

Like other ancient kings, Chandragupta II favoured polygony; and he had at least two queens, Dhruvadevī and Kuveranāgā. Dhruvadevī was the mother of Mahārājādhirāja Kumāragupta I and perhaps, Mahāraja Govindagupta; and Kuveranāgā was the mother of Prabhāvatīguptā.

He was a devout follower of Vishṇu; and he assumed the title of Paramabhaṭṭaraka, Paramabhvāgavata, etc. On the obverse of his Chakra-Vikrama type of gold coins he receives *Prasāda* (gift of sweet) directly from the hand of Vishṇu.[2] Garuḍa, the mount of Vishṇu, is also seen on his silver and copper coins.[3] Besides, Lakshmī, Durgā and Gaṅgā are seen from his coins.[4] He, however, showed tolerance and favour to other forms of religion; and his sāñchī stone inscription[5] and the account of Fa-hien also support the above conclusion.

Speaking about the economic condition of the people of Magadha, the Chinese pilgrim, Fa-hien remarks that the cities and towns of this country are the greatest of all the Middle kingdom. The inhabitants are rich and prosperous and vie with one another in practising benevolence and righteousness. They establish charitable institutions, such as, hospitals and rest-houses for travellers by the side of roads.[6] It appears, therefore, that the country was prosperous and people enjoyed peace and happiness. Moreover, the region south of Mathura is fertile and "the people are numerous and happy."[7] No doubt the westward drive of Samudragupta[8] completed successfully by Chandragupta II, was largely inspired by the desire to occupy the coastal regions of Saurashtra, which had grown rich from the trade with the West. And the great care taken by Skandagupta to hold the

[1]Goyal, *HIG*, p. 251.
[2]Altekar, *Coinage*, p. 145.
[3]*Ibid*, p. 150.
[4]Ārcher, Lion-slayer, Horseman, Chhatra, Couch, Standard, Chakra-vikrama Gold Coins. Altekar, *Coinage*, pp. 91-150.
[5]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 29.
[6]Legge, *Records of Buddhistic Kingdoms*; Smith, *EHI*, p. 312.
[7]*Ibid.*
[8]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 11.

same region securely[1] was probably partly due to the maritime advantages of the West and its commercial prosperity. For the first time in the Gupta period Chandragupta II issued gold, silver and copper coins[2] to meet the demand of different economic needs of the people.

Chandragupta II and Vikramāditya Legend

In the popular legend king Vikramāditya was the ruler of Pāṭaliputra and Ujjaini and he conquered many lands. There is a great deal of controversy regarding the real identity of Vikramāditya. After defeating their foes, a good many monarchs in the Hindu Period assumed the title of Vikramāditya. Many of the kings of the Sātavāhana, Śaka, Gupta, Rāshṭrakuṭa and other dynasties assumed that title. There are many popular stories which commonly agree on the following points about the legendary Rājā Vikramāditya.

1. Vikramāditya was the ruler of both Pāṭaliputra and Ujjaini and he was the "*Pāṭliputra-Puravara-adhisvara* and *Ujjaini-Puravara-adhisvara*.[3]
2. He was the Śakāri,[4] the enemy of the Śakas who ultimately vanquished them.
3. He was, again, the slayer of the Hūṇas.
4. He was credited with the establishment of the Vikrama-Saṃvat of 58 BC.
5. His court was graced by the Navaratna including Kālidāsa.
6. He was also the son of Mahendrāditya.
7. Also, he was *Mahārājādhirāja*, (a great king of kings).

Not more than one of the above attributes can be assigned to the kings of the Sātavāhana, Śaka, Rāshṭrakūṭa and others. H.C. Raychaudhuri thinks that Vikramāditya of the popular stories was a composite personality,[5] combining the different achievements of three kings of the Gupta dynasty, namely, Chandragupta II, Skandagupta and Purugupta.

Skandagupta satisfied two of the above points. He was the slayer of the Hūṇas and was the son of Mahendrāditya, for his

[1]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 52.
[2]Altekar, *Coinage*, pp. 150-61.
[3]Chattopadhyaya, *EHNI*, p. 175.
[4]*Ibid*, p. 172.
[5]*PHAI*.

father Kumāragupta I had assumed that title. It is also said that Purugupta had defeated the Hūṇas who had attacked his empire.

The achievements of Chandragupta II satisfied many of the above mentioned conditions. He was the ruler of both Pāṭaliputra and Ujjaini and assumed the titles of *Pāṭaliputra-Puravara-adhiśvara* and *Ujjaini-Puravara-adhiśvara*. Further, he vanquished the Śakas of western India and assumed the title of *Śakāri*. Moreover, the titles of *Śrī-Vikramaḥ*, *Siṁha-Vikramaḥ*, *Ajita-Vikramaḥ*, *Vikramāṅka* and *Vikramāditya*, actually occur on a large number of his coins.[1] It is also believed that Chandragupta II was the patron of the celebrated "nine-gems" including Kālidāsa and Varāhamihira. It is also noted that the political career of Samudragupta and of Raghu of the *Raghuvaṁśa* of Kālidāsa are perhaps the same. It, then, tempts us to place Kālidāsa during the reign of Chandragupta II; there are also many other reasons in support of our arguments.[2] As regards the other members of the *Nava-ratna-Sabhā*, it is uncertain that all of them flourished about the same time. Over and above, Chandragupta II was one of the greatest conquerors of ancient India and he was undoubtedly a *Parama-bhaṭṭāraka-Mahārājādhirāja*. Unless we have very strong reasons to disbelieve the above account, it can, thus, be conjectured that Chandragupta II was no other than the legendary Vikramāditya.

Samudragupta had begun the work of an all-India conquest; to his son Chandragupta II, fell the task of completing it. By defeating the Kushāṇas and the Śakas he pushed the boundary of the Gupta empire to the Vālhika country in the north-west and Gujarat in the west, to Bengal in the east, to the Himalayas in the north and to the Narmada in the south. He had considerable political influence over the north-western part of Deccan through his daughter's marriage with the Vākāṭaka ruler. He was a liberal patron of arts and literature, and very probably Kālidāsa was his contemporary. His administration was efficient and enlightened and V.A. Smith says, "Probably India has never been governed better after the oriental manner, than it

[1]Altekar, *Coinage*, pp. 91-161.
[2]Smith, *EHI*, pp. 320-22; Majumdar and Pusalker, *The Classical Age*, pp. 302-07.

was during the reign of Vikramāditya."[1] If Chandragupta Vikramāditya lived longer in the memory of a grateful posterity which had forgotten his illustrious fathers, the explanation is not far to seek. People are more impressed by the finished superstructure, and give credit to its architect than by the master-builder who conceived the plan and laboriously laid the foundation. The great general Samudragupta is a hero of history; but Chandragupta, who ensured the material and cultural prosperity of the empire, won a permanent place in the hearts of his people. His last known date, as recorded in his Sāñchi Stone inscription is (the Gupta era 93=) 412-13 AD and the first known date of his son and successor, Kumāragupta I as recorded in his Bilsād stone pillar inscription is (the Gupta era 96=) 415-16 AD. It is thus presumed that the reign of Chandragupta II ended some time between 412 and 415 AD.

KUMĀRAGUPTA I

Kumāragupta I was the son and successor of Chandragupta II and his mother was Dhruvadevī. The last known date of his father is 412-13 AD and the first known date of his reign is 415-416 AD. He, thus, ascended the throne some time between 413 AD to 416 AD; and his last known date from his silver coin is 455-56 AD (GE=136).[2]

The main sources of information regarding his reign are his Bilsad stone pillar inscription, Dhanaidaha C.P., Karamdanda stone liṅga inscription, two Damodarpur Copper-plate inscriptions, Mankuwar Buddhist stone image inscription, two Gadhwa inscriptions, Mandasor Stone inscription (of Kumāragupta I and Bandhuvarman), Tumain Fragmentary inscription of Ghaṭotkachagupta, Junagarh Rock inscription and Bhitari Stone Pillar inscription of Skandagupta[3] and his Archer, Horseman, Swordman, Lion-Slayer, Tiger-slayer, Elephant-rider, Elephant-rider-Lion-slayer, Rhinoceros-slayer, Aśvamedha, Kārttikeya, Chhatra, Apratigha, Lyricist, King and Queen-Garuḍa without stretched wings types of gold coins and his silver and copper coins.[4]

[1] Smith, *EHI*, pp. 345-46.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Sircar, *Select Ins.*, pp. 278-88, 298-99, 312; Fleet, *CII*, III, pp. 39-46, 52-64.

[4] Altekar, *Coinage*, pp. 167-239.

Colonel J.B. Watson[1] has recorded a bardic tradition of Kathiawad to the effect that his father Chandragupta II appointed Kumāragupta I as a Governor in the Kathiawad region. The tradition further states that after his father's death he became the king of Magadha and after his death his son Skandagupta occupied the same. Moreover, Kumāragupta I placed Chakrapāṇi (Chakrapālit), son of Praṇadatta (Parṇadatta) as a governor there.[2] Following the above suggestion V.A. Smith[3] suggests that the western types of the silver coins of Kumāragupta I were issued, when he was a governor there. J. Allan and others reject it purely as a bardic tradition.[4] At least on two important considerations we cannot reject the above account purely as a bardic tradition. The chronological order of the Gupta rulers from Chandragupta II to Skandagupta on the throne of Magadha is quite correct. The appointment of Chakrapālit (Chakrapāṇi) as a governor of Kathiawad is also correct. His special attachment towards western and south-western India in the later years also favours the above contention. This reminds us of a remarkable incident in Mughal history. During the life time of Shāh-Jahān, Aurangzeb was appointed as a governor of Deccan, and when he himself became a reigning monarch, Deccan received his first attention.[5]

Kumāragupta I had a long reign of more than forty years; but unfortunately details of his political career are not known to us. He, however, inherited a vast empire from his father, Chandragupta II and its eastern and western provinces were newly acquired by his father. Thus, they required a good administrative set up through a wise selection of governors and he did it by appointing Chirātadatta, Chakrapālit and others.[6] Perhaps, most of his time was devoted not in new conquests but in consolidation and sound administration. In the opinion of R. D. Banerji,[7] "the earliest part of his long reign of over 40

[1]*The Indian Antiquary*, II, 1873, p. 313; Fleet, *CII*, III, pp. 49-50.
[2]Junagarh Rock Inscription, also refers to it; Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 56.
[3]*JRAS*, 1889, p. 123.
[4]Fleet, *CII*, III, pp. 49-50.
[5]Damodarpur Copper Plate (Kumārgupta I); Sircar, *Select Ins.*, pp. 283-85 (1.3).
[6]Junagarh Rock Inscription; Sircar, *Select Ins.*, pp. 299-308 (l. 16).
[7]*HIG*, pp. 36-37.

years was by far the most prosperous in the total rule of the Gupta dynasty. The impetus received by the Western overseas trade and the influx of foreign gold into the country manifested itself in a great revival of art. It was in this reign that Gupta architecture and culture received its final form. The influence of art is also to be distinctly seen in the coins of the ruling emperor, which are the finest of the entire series."

Kumāragupta I was able to maintain the great empire intact left by his grandfather and father, for his inscriptions and coins have been found from North Bengal to Western Malwa, and his son's inscription have been found from the Junagarh region.[1] One of his governors, Chirātadatta, governed Puṇḍravardhana Bhūkti in Bengal, another, Prince Ghaṭotkachagupta, governed Eastern Malwa and his subordinate ally Bandhuvarman administered Western Malwa. It is also lyrically described in the Mandasor inscription[2] of Kumāragupta I and Bandhuvarman which runs thus "while Kumāragupta was reigning over the (whole) earth, whose pendulous marriage-string is the verge of the four oceans; whose large breasts are (the mountains) Sumeru and Kailāśa; (and) whose laughter is the full-blown flowers showered forth from the borders of the woods; . . . . "[3]

It is, however, suggested that his reign was not a peaceful one. A posthumous record of Mandasor of the year 473 AD (Malwa era 529)[4] records that Indra was suspicious of the power of Govinda. Here, Govinda is evidently *Mahārāja* Govindagupta of Vaiśālī seal and was the son of Chandragupta II and his queen Dhruvasvamini. Govindagupta, the brother of Kumāragupta I, revolted against the royal authority of Magadha and for sometime became independent in Mandasor. The record is dated in the Malwa era and does not follow the usual practice of recording the Gupta era. According to some scholars[5] Indra is here identified with Kumāragupta I who assumed the title of *Śrī-Mahendra, Ajit-Mahendra, Mahendravarmā.* The king was,

[1] *HIG*, pp. 36-37.

[2] Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 86.

[3] Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 86, fn. 2—Refer The Himalayas and Vindhyas for breasts.

[4] Fleet, *CII*, III, pp. 79-80.

[5] *Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report, 1922-23*, p. 187; Chattopadhyaya, *EHNI*, p. 177.

59695

however, able to put down that rebellion and Govindagupta was replaced by his son Ghaṭotkachagupta as a governor of Eastern Malwa with its headquarters at Tumbavana.[1] But within a short time peace was concluded between Kumāragupta I and Govindagupta. The latter, who had acquired enough administrative experience at Vaiśālī, was posted at Mandasor to look after the Imperial interest in Western Malwa, for it was considered the worst trouble spot in his kingdom.

His westward march probably encouraged his advance in the Narmadā valley. As many as 1,395 silver coins from Samand in the Satara district and 13 coins from Ellichpur in Berar have been found.[2] Some of them have a close similarity with the coins of the Traikūṭaka dynasty which ruled in the middle of the fifth century AD in south Gujarat.[3] It has led J. Allen to conclude that the Traikuṭa rule was supplanted by the rule of the Guptas in that region.[4]

The Vākāṭaka queen Prabhāvatīgupta was always proud of her Gupta lineage[5] and maintained good relation with his step-brother, Kumāragupta I. Her son, Pravarasena II also kept up that tradition and was absolutely a peace-loving man [6] But after his death his son, Narendrasena could no longer maintain that relationship with the Imperial Guptas of Magadha. He married Ajjitabhaṭṭāraka, a princess of the Kuntala family.[7] Kumāragupta I was by then quite old; his son Ghaṭotkachagupta, Skandagupta and Purugupta were gradually asserting themselves in royal affairs and in course of time they could not maintain their family relationship with the Vākāṭakas.

In the south the Nalas had enmity with the Kuntalas of Deccan. Narendrasena married a princess of the Kuntala royal family. Thus, for the sake of his own safety Nalas formed an alliance with the powerful Guptas of Northern India and fought

[1]Sircar, *Select Ins.*, p. 298.

[2]Vaiśālī seal, *ASIAR, 1903-4*, p. 107; Aiyanger, S.K., *AISIHC*, p. 285.

[3]Altekar, *Coinage*, p. 217.

[4]Altekar, *Coinage*, p. 222; Rapson, E.J., *Catalogue of the Coins in the British Museum, Andhra Dynasty*, pl. XVIII, pp. 930-978.

[5]Poona Copper-Plate & Rithpur Copper-Plate: Sircar, *Select Ins.*, pp. 411-417.

[6]Chammak Copper Plate of Pravarsana, *Ibid*, pp. 418-24.

[7]Majumdar and Pusalker, *The Classical Age*, p. 184.

against the joint power of the Vākāṭaka-Kuntalas. The Guptas from their mighty possession of western India and Bhavattavarman (=Bhavadatta Varmā), the king of the Nalas, from the east attacked them. Narendrasena was ultimately defeated by them. The Gupta-Nala relationship was further cemented by a matrimonial alliance between them;[1] and as a mark of gratitude, perhaps, Bhavattavarman named his son Skandavarman, after the Gupta prince Skandagupta and like his contemporary Kumāragupta I was also the worshipper of Kārttikeya and Śiva.

Kumāragupta I was the first king of his dynasty whose five inscriptions have been found from Bengal. They undoubtedly testify that his father Chandragupta II merely "defeated the Vaṅga hosts"[2] and had no time to consolidate the Gupta authority over there. It was left to his son and successor, Kumāragupta to fulfill his unfinished task. For the sake of good administration he established a permanent administrative unit at Puṇḍravardhana-Bhūkti and Cirātadatta was appointed governor there.

Kumāragupta I was a worthy successor of his great father and performed the great horse-sacrifice and minted Aśvamedha type of gold coins. He also assumed the titles of *Śrī-Mahendra, Ajita Mahendra, Siṁha Mahendra, Aśvamedha Mahendra, Mahendravarmā, Mahendrakalpa, Śrī-Mahendra-Siṁha, Mahendra-Kumāra,* etc.[3]

In the closing years of his reign his empire was threatened seriously by the invasions of the Pushyamitras and the Hūṇas.[4] But the danger was averted by the valour of Prince Skandagupta who not only repulsed their attack but also inflicted a crushing defeat upon them. However, in the midst of these troubles Kumāragupta I died.

The reign of Kumāragupta I was a golden age of art and literature. Sculpture flourished in all the principal cities of the empire and reached a high degree of excellence. He also introduced many excellent devices in his rich varieties of gold coins. He was the follower of Kārttikeya and minted Kārttikeya

[1] *The Classical Age*; Goyal, *HIG*, pp. 259-60.
[2] Mahboobpur Iron Pillar Inscription of Chandra, Sircar, *Select Ins.*, pp. 275-77.
[3] Altekar, *Coinage*, pp. 167-239.
[4] Fleet, *CII*, III, pp. 52-64.

type of gold coins.[1] Lakshmī, Durgā, Gaṅgā and Garuḍa are also seen from his coins.[2] Yet it was an age of tolerance and Buddhism, Jainism, Śaivism and Vaishṇavism were equally favoured in his domain.[3]

[1]Altekar, *Coinage*, pp. 203.
[2]*Ibid*, pp. 167-239 (Lakshmī from large number of coins).
[3]Sircar, *Select Ins.*, pp. 282, 288.

CHAPTER III

SKANDAGUPTA AND HIS SUCCESSORS AND THE DECLINE OF THE EMPIRE

Skandagupta

Towards the end of the reign of Kumāragupta I and at the beginning of the reign of Skandagupta, the Gupta empire suffered a serious set-back due to some internal and external troubles. We are, however, familiar with his career and achievements from his Junagarh Rock inscription, Kahaum Stone Pillar inscription, Indore C.P., Bhitari Stone Pillar inscription, Bihar Stone Pillar inscription and his Archer, King and Lakshmī, Chhatra, Horseman types of his gold coins and his silver coins; and it is further supplemented by the Tumain Fragmentary inscription of Ghaṭotkachagupta and the coins of Purugupta and Ghaṭotkachagupta.[1]

The Junagarh rock inscription and Bhitari Stone Pillar inscription are quite useful to understand the troubles which Skandagupta had to face at the beginning of his career. The former is the earliest record of his reign.[2] According to it, "the supreme king of kings....had developed heroism by the strength of his arms; and who plucked (and utilised) the authority of (his local) representatives, who were so many Garuḍas, (and used it as) an antidote against (hostile) kings, who were so many serpents, lifting up their hoods in pride and arrogance;—Skandagupta, of great glory, the abode of kingly qualities, who, when (his) father by his own power had attained the position by being a friend of the gods, bowed down his enemies, made subject to himself the (whole) earth, bounded by the waters of

[1]Sircar, *Select. Ins.*, pp. 298-319; Altekar, *Coinage*, pp. 240-65.
[2]Ref. GE. 136, 137 and 138=455, 456, and 457-58 AD.

the four oceans (and) full of thriving countries round the borders of it; whose fame, moreover, even (his) enemies, in the countries of the Mlechchhas .... having (their) pride broken down to the very root, announce with the words—"verily the victory had been achieved by him;—(and) whom the goddess of fortune and splendour of her own accord selected as her husband, having in succession (and) with judgment skilfully taken into consideration and though over all the causes of virtues and faults (and) having discarded all (the other) sons of kings (as not coming up to the standard)."[1] The above account is further supplemented by his Bhitari stone pillar inscription (dated 455-67 AD).[2] It records the crushing defeats of the Pushyamitras and the Hūṇas and repeats thrice the ruined fortunes of his family and their restoration by him "and then, crying, the victory has been achieved, betook himself to (his) mother, whose eyes were full of tears from joy, just as, Kṛishṇa, when he had slain (his) enemies, betook himself to (his mother) Devakī .... "[3]

The above account also records the death of his old father; and his son, Skandagupta had to face troubles—*(a)* over the succession to the throne, *(b)* the hostility of kings and war with the Pushyamitras, *(d)* war with the Hūṇas (Mlechchhas). It is very difficult to arrange them in a chronological order; however, the major troubles were over by 458 AD.[4]

Succession to the Throne

There is a great deal of controversy among Indologists regarding the war of succession between the three sons of Kumāragupta I, viz, Purugupta, Skandagupta and Ghaṭotkachagupta. According to the ancient Indian tradition the eldest son should succeed to the throne after the death of their father. But this law of primogeniture was not always followed by the Gupta rulers; they rather preferred that the ablest son should succeed to the throne and it was seen in the case of Samudragupta.

It can be presumed that in his old age Kumāragupta I

[1]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 62.
[2]*Ibid*, p. 55.
[3]*Ibid.*
[4]Refer Junagarh Rock Inscription of Skandagupta, (455-58 AD): Sircar, *Select Ins.*

expressed his desire to relinquish his throne to his most competent son, Skandagupta. His reliance on Skandagupta was obvious, since he selected the latter from among his three sons to fight the powerful Pushyamitras and turbulent Hūṇas. Skandagupta's selection to the throne is, perhaps, reflected in the Apratigha type of gold coins of Kumāragupta I.[1] On the obverse of the coin a male figure is standing in the centre, wearing a *dhoti*, with folded hands, and is thinking seriously, and his hair is knotted like that of a *Yogi.* To the right a female figure with knotted hair and in ordinary dress; her left hand rests on her waist; but her right hand is bent and raised as if she is engaged in argument. Her fingers almost touch the central figure. Another male figure is standing to the right with a shield in one hand and a Garuḍa standard in another hand. None of the figures is nimbate. But as usual the goddess of fortune (Lakshmī) is nimbate with a lotus flower in hand.

The central figure is no doubt Kumāragupta I, the lady on the right, his favourite queen and to the left, the crown prince (or his general). He is contemplating to renounce the world abdicating the throne in favour of the crown prince. His queen and crown-prince (or his general) are trying their best to dissuade him from taking such a decision; but they are without success. Kumāragupta I has expressed his inability to change his decision with folded hands. He is rather firm in his resolution and is, therefore, described in the legend on the reverse as "*apratigha*" (invincible); no one can change or influence his decision. Similar tradition is also narrated in the *Kathāsaritsāgara.* Mahendrāditya generally identified with Kumāragupta I nominated his son Vikramāditya (Skandagupta) as his next successor and he himself retired to Vārāṇasī.[2] A Buddhist work, *Chandragarbhaparíprichchhā* also mentions that king Mahendrasena (Kumāragupta I) crowned his son Duprasahahasta (Skandagupta), who had defeated the Yavanas, Vāhlika and Sākunas, as his next successor before his retirement as a religious recluse.[3] Hence, from the combined testimony of the coin and literary tradition it follows that Kumāragupta I in his old age abdicated

[1]Altekar, *Coinage*, p. 207.

[2]Tawney, C.H., *The Ocean of Story*, IX, p. 1; Allan, *BMCGD*, p. XLIX, fn. 1.

[3]Jayaswal, K.P., *An Imperial History of India*, p. 36.

the throne in favour of his son Skandagupta Vikramāditya who had crushed the power of the Mlechchhas (Hūṇas), and led a religious life in seclusion.

Still there is some scope for idle thinking which is rightly explained by A.L. Basham.[1] His direct claim to the throne was not strictly legitimate, for Skandagupta was the son of a Śūdrā concubine and was raised to the Ārya status by the panegyrics of bards. There is no doubt that his mother did not even attend the simple status of a queen; she must have been much lower in rank than that which is substantiated by the careful omission of her name from his own records. Skandagupta was rather shy about recording his mother's name in his inscriptions. Moreover, among his many inscriptions[2] the genealogy of his forefather is recorded only in his Bhitari Stone Pillar inscription.[3] Certainly he was a man of so-called "mean origin" and, thus, he had purposely avoided the age old tradition of the Guptas.[4]

It can, thus, be suggested that immediately after the death of Kumāragupta I, Purugupta, the son of Mahādevī Anantadevī, occupied the throne of Magadha. At that very moment Skandagupta was away from home in connection with his wars against the Pushyamitras and the Hūṇas. He returned to Magadha after his victory over them. With the entire imperial army at his command and with the "developed heroism by (the strength of his) arms" and with "the authority of (his local) representatives",[5] Skandagupta was able to dethrone Purugupta and thus "the goddess of fortune also discarding" all the other sons of kings (as not coming up to the standard) selected Skandagupta "as her husband". Thus, in the war of succession he was ably supported by the imperial army and many of the feudal chiefs[6] who also supported the will of the dead emperor.

War with the Pushyamitras and the hostility of Kings

Just before the death of his father, Skandagupta fought against

[1]*BSOAS*, XLVII, pp. 368-69.

[2]Junagarh Rock Inscription; Kahaum Stone Pillar Inscription; Indore Copper Plate; Bihar Stone Pillar Inscription; Sircar, *Select Ins.*, pp. 299, 308-09, 316.

[3]Sircar, *Select Ins.*, p. 312.

[4]Absence of Names in the Genealogical Tables.

[5]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 62.

[6]*Ibid.*

the hostile kings "who were so many serpents." S.K. Chattopadhyaya identifies them with the Pushyamitras. In support of his suggestion he has referred to J.F. Fleet. According to him, "there is possibly a secondary allusion to Skandagupta having overthrown some kings of the well-known Nāga or serpent lineage."[1] The Pushyamitras were, thus, the Nāgas of the Vindhya region and the Nāgas are mentioned as such in the contemporary inscriptions.[2]

But the Pushyamitras as such are referred to in the *Vishṇupurāṇa*[3] and *Vāyupurāṇa*[4] which are the oldest and much more reliable among the Paurāṇic texts and place them over Mekala country of the Narmada valley.[5] Among other kings the Vākāṭaka ruler, Narendrasena was one. He claimed to have restored the fallen fortunes of his family by defeating the kings of Kośala, Mekhala and Malwa in the second half of the fifth century AD. But Malwa was an integral part of the Gupta empire before the ravaging attacks of the Hūṇas. D.C. Sircar, however, suggests that "this may refer to Narendrasena's success against the vassals of the Guptas whose subordinate allies he and his immediate predecessors had been."[6] S.R. Goyal, further, points out, "it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that the reference in the Junagarh Praśasti of Skandagupta, to the hostile kings 'who were so many serpents lifting their hoods in pride and arrogance' alludes to the rebellious Varmans, aggressive Vākāṭakas and their supporters. But Skandagupta rose to the occasion and with the help of his local representatives, such as, Prabhākara, 'who were so many garuḍas', he once again established his authority in the respective provinces."[7]

War with the Hūṇas (Mlechchhas)

Towards the closing years of the reign of Kumāragupta I, the Hūṇas invaded India.[8] It is not quite correct to suggest that

[1]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 62, fn. 2.
[2]Chattopadhyaya, *EHNI*, p. 179.
[3]Wilson's Translation, p. 383.
[4]Pargiter, *DAK*, p. 51.
[5]Wilson, *Vishṇupurāṇa*, p. 383, fn. 6.
[6]Majumdar and Pusalker, *The Classical Age*, p. 184.
[7]Goyal, *HIG*, p. 290.
[8]"Pitari-divam=Upe(te) . . ." Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 54 (l. 12), Junagarh

the Hūṇa invasion first started during the reign of Skandagupta.[1] "This invasion, though sporadic in character and transitory in nature, presented, however, a very critical hour of national crisis in the Gupta History. Coming as it did in the wake of the fierce Pushyamitra invasion, it had a dangerously demoralising effect on the morale of the people, the army as well as the much-troubled, struggling emperor who had not yet recovered from the shock caused by the former invasion. The harassed and tired monarch, along with his battered armies, had again to gird up the loins to meet the new threat from a new quarter which apparently seemed to throw off the whole empire in utter confusion and panic and divest it of all the pomp and glory that was Gupta. Thus, torn between the external and internal crises, but conscious of the great glory of his forefathers, proud of his crushing victories over the Pushyamitras and confident of his valour and powers, Skandagupta rapidly advanced to meet the threatening situation and rose quite equal to the occasion. The victor of the Pushyamitras, ultimately dealt a crushing blow to the ferocious Hūṇas who were so thoroughly defeated and demoralised that they dared not invade the Gupta territory for long with the result that for more than a quarter of a century the Empire was immune from their cruel and horrible depredations."[2] Neither literature, nor tradition refers to the details of the Hūṇa war; but it is carefully narrated in the Bhitari Stone Pillar inscription and the Junagarh Rock inscription of Skandagupta.

As in war Skandagupta was equally brilliant in peace. Like his forefathers he also maintained gold and silver currency system throughout his empire and that helped a great deal in inland and foreign trade. He also followed the Gupta tradition of worshipping Hindu gods and goddesses. He was, a worshipper of Vishṇu, Lakshmī, Kārttikeya, and Śiva along with their mounts Garuḍa, Peacock and Nandi (Bull); he, however, did not neglect the other religions, such as, Jainism and

is far away from Pataliputra and thus it would take much time to reach Western India for attacking the Huṇas—Read the texts against the background of the Bhitari and Junagarh records. Sircar, *Select Ins.*, pp. 299, 312.

[1]Thakur, Upendra, *Huṇas in India*, p. 64.

[2]*Ibid*, pp. 64-65.

Buddhism.[1]

Sometimes the emperor had to take special care of a particular province in his kingdom. Skandagupta was specially anxious to appoint the most suitable governor for his province at Saurashtra and Kathiawad which occupied a very strategic position between the two formidable powers like the Vākāṭakas on the south and the Hūṇas on the north-west. His anxiety in this matter is clearly reflected to in his Junagarh Rock inscription.[2] "Among all my servants put together, who is there, who suitable; endowed with intellect; modest; possessed of a disposition that is not destitute of wisdom and memory endowed with truth, straightforwardness, nobility, and prudent behaviour; and possessed of sweetness, civility, and fame—loyal; affectionate; endowed with many characteristics; and possessed of a mind that (has been tried and) is (found to be) pure by all the tests of honesty possessed of an inner soul pervaded by (the inclination for) the acquittance of debts and obligations; occupied with the welfare of all mankind; capable both in the lawful acquisition of wealth, and also in the preservation of it, when acquired, and further in causing the increase of it, when protected, (and able) to dispense it on worthy objects, when it has been increased, shall govern all my (countries of the) Saurashtra? I have it; (there is) just one man Parṇadatta, competent to bear this burden."[3] The availability of an efficient officer like Parṇadatta for undertaking the sole responsibility of the administration of Saurashtra and its environs gave the emperor a great relief. Parṇadatta was intelligent enough to appoint his able son, Chakrapālita to administer the important city of Junagarh.

Amidst the gigantic task of restoring imperial authority and administration over the outlying provinces, public works were not neglected. The most important of such works was the restoration and reconstruction of the Sudarśana Lake whose high embankment was partly damaged as a result of excessive rains and the rise of high floods in the Palasini and other rivers of the neighbourhood. A similar incident occurred a little over three hundred years before, during the reign of Mahākshatrapa

[1]Altekar, *Coinage*, pp. 240-61; Sircar, *Select Ins.*, pp. 299-319.
[2]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 56.
[3]*Ibid.*

Rudradāman.[1] After the flood all the people got very nervous and frightened. The municipal governor, Chakrapālita, having in view the "welfare of the king and city", made "an immeasurable expenditure of wealth, and built an embankment of hundred cubits in length, and sixty-eight in breadth and seven men's height in elevation."[2] This was done in 455-57 AD. The people heaved a sigh of relief and praised in glowing terms both Parṇadatta and his son Chakrapālita.

Skandagupta ruled from about 455 to 467 AD. At least towards the later part of his reign he enjoyed peace and prosperity which are reflected in his Indore copper plate and Kahaum Stone Pillar Inscription.[3] The Kahaum record refers to the "peaceful" reign of Skandagupta, "Lord of hundred of kings", whose "Hall of audience is shaken by the wind caused by the falling down (in the act of performing obedience) of the heads of a hundred kings", and "whose fame is spread far and wide; who excells all others in prosperity."[4] B.P. Sinha, perhaps, rightly remarks, "Thus Skandagupta was a great conqueror, the liberator of the nation, the restorer of the pride of the Imperial Guptas, and above all the fountain-head of a benevolent administration."[5] He was undoubtedly the last of the great emperors of the Imperial Gupta dynasty of Magadha; and after his death the power and prestige of the great empire very rapidly declined and different provinces went out of the Imperial control one after another.

SUCCESSORS OF SKANDAGUPTA

It is very difficult for us to give a systematic account of the Imperial Guptas after the death of Skandagupta who was the last great king of this dynasty. The names of many Gupta kings are before us; but it is really a problem to put them in a proper historical setting and their genealogy and chronology are all confusing. However, an honest attempt can be made for the construction of history after Skandagupta, leaving enough scope

[1]Junagarh Rock Inscription: Sircar, *Select Ins.*, p. 175 (dated *c.* 130-50 AD.)

[2]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 64.

[3]Sircar, *Select Ins.*, pp. 308-09.

[4]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 67.

[5]Sinha, B.P., *Decline of the Kingdom of Magadha*, p. 35.

for reconstruction and re-thinking.

The famous Bhitari seal of Kumāragupta I has altogether omitted the name of Skandagupta; but records the name of Purugupta as the son of Kumāragupta I.[1] Again, Purugupta was the father of Narasiṁhagupta and the grand-father of Kumāragupta II, who was the issuer of the Bhitari seal. Therefore, the genealogical table is like this:

Kumāragupta I

Skandagupta (son) | Purugupta (son)
Narasiṁhagupta (son)
Kumāragupta II (son)

Kumāragupta II was the same as the Kumāragupta of the Sārnāth Buddhist image inscription of 474 (GE 154) AD.[2] Moreover, the Sārnāth Buddhist image inscription of Buddhagupta of 477 AD (GE 157)[3] and the Damodarpur Copper-plate of Buddhagupta 483 AD (GE 163)[4] create a fresh problem in the Gupta genealogy. The earliest known date of Buddhagupta is 477 AD and the last known date of Skandagupta is 467 AD; that is, within 10 (or 9 years) we have to accommodate three rulers, such as, Purugupta, Narasiṁhagupta and Kumāragupta II.

The Gupta genealogy is further complicated by the discovery of some inscriptions, seals and coins. Vainyagupta was another Gupta ruler known from his Gunaighar Copper-plate.[5] Again, Vishṇugupta, as recorded in his Nālandā seal, was the son of Kumāragupta and grandson of Narasiṁhagupta.[6] The Gupta genealogy stands thus:

Kumāragupta I

Skandagupta (son) | Purugupta (son)
Narasiṁhagupta (son)
Kumāragupta II (son)
Vishṇugupta (son)

[1] *JASB*, LVIII, pt. I, p. 84.
[2] *ASIAR*, *1914-15*, p. 124.
[3] *Ibid*, pp. 124-25.
[4] *EI*, XV, p. 135.
[5] *IHQ*, VI, p. 53. Also his Nālandā Seal, *IHQ*, XIX, p. 275.
[6] *EI*, XXVI, pp. 235.

The epigraphic records are faster complicated by the discovery of the coins of Ghaṭōtkachagupta, Chandragupta III and Prakāśāditya. Besides, the coins of Purugupta, Narasiṁhagupta, Kumāragupta II, Buddhagupta, Vishṇugupta, Vainyagupta have also been discovered.[1]

As recorded in the Bhitāri Pillar inscription of Skandagupta[2] he was the son and successor of Kumāragupta I; but Bhitari seal of Kumāragupta[3] mentions that Kumāragupta I was succeeded by his son Purugupta. Again, the last known date of Kumāragupta was 455 AD and Skandagupta ruled from c. 455 AD to 467 AD; and there is no place of Purugupta between Kumāragupta I and Skandagupta. Perhaps to solve this problem, it is suggested by Hoernle, Krishṇa Dev and D. R. Bhandarkar that Purugupta and Skandagupta were the same person[4], for they were the sons and successors of the same ruler Kumāragupta I. But it appears quite unlikely from the genealogical lists recorded in the Gupta epigraphs. They were undoubtedly different persons and ruled simultaneously or one after another. R. G. Basak[5], further, suggests that the empire was divided and ruled simultaneously by (1) Purugupta, Narasiṁhagupta and Kumāragupta III and the other group by (2) Skandagupta, Kumāragupta II (of the Sārnāth inscription), Budhagupta and Bhānugupta. He thinks that Purugupta and his successors "were allowed by Skandagupta and his successors to enjoy a small kingdom, somewhere in the eastern portion of the Gupta empire, perhaps in south Bihar".[6] But from his records it is certain that Budhagupta was the son of Purugupta and as such cannot be the descendent of Skandagupta. Moreover, his kingdom extended from Bengal to Malwa, while the dominion of Narasiṁhagupta who defeated Mihirakula roughly comprised the area from Magadha to Bengal.

As we have discussed earlier, Purugupta, who was in Magadha, occupied the throne of Magadha immediately after the death of his father and ruled for a very brief period but; he

[1] *EI*, pp. 262, 271-281.
[2] Fleet, *CII*, III.
[3] *JASB*, LVIII, Pt. I, p. 48.
[4] *JRAS*, Pt. I, p. 129; *EI*, XXVI, Pt. V, pp. 235; *IC*, IX, p. 231.
[5] Basak, *HNEI*, p. 62.
[6] *Ibid.*

was dethroned by his step-brother Skandagupta after his successful campaigns against the Hūṇas and the Pushyamitras and all are directly and indirectly referred to in his Bhitari stone pillar inscription. Purugupta never again occupied his father's throne. It has some corroboration in the literary tradition. According to the *Ārya-Mañjuśrī-Mūlakalpa* and a Buddhist scholar, Paramārtha[1], Skandagupta was succeeded by Bālāditya who was identified as Narasiṁhagupta Bālāditya, son of Purugupta. He had a very short reign, and he was succeeded by his son Kumāragupta II who ruled at least upto 473 AD.[2] His short reign was terminated by Budhagupta in 476 AD.[3]

But the place of Narasiṁhagupta Bālāditya in the above genealogical table has not been accepted by a group of scholars. H. C. Raychaudhuri[4], K. P. Jayaswal,[5] R. N. Saletore[6] and R. N. Dandekar[7] hold that Bhānugupta of the Eran inscription of 510 AD assumed the title of Bālāditya and defeated the Hūṇa King Mihirakula. But N. K. Bhattasali[8], R. K. Mookerjee,[9] R. G. Basak[10] and B. P. Sinha[11] identify Narasiṁhagupta with the Bālāditya of Hiuen Tsāng[12] and placed him in the sixth century AD. According to R. K. Mookerji[13], however, Skandagupta was succeeded by his step-brother Purugupta (467 AD) who was in turn succeeded by his three sons, *viz.* Kumāragupta II[14] (473 AD), Budhagupta (476 AD) and Narasiṁhagupta Bālāditya (495 AD). He further, suggests that Kumāragupta III of the Bhitari seal succeeded Narasiṁhagupta Bālāditya and was followed by Vishṇugupta of the Nālandā Seal. Moreover,

[1]Sinha, *DKM*, p. 94, fn. 5.
[2]Sircar, *Select Ins.*, pp. 320-21 (Sārnāth Inscription).
[3]*Ibid*, p. 323.
[4]Raychaudhuri, *PHAI*, p. 596, fn. 2.
[5]Jayaswal, *IHI*, pp. 47, 53.
[6]Saletore, R.N., *Life in the Gupta Age*, p. 49.
[7]Dandekar, R.N., *History of the Guptas*, pp. 130-52.
[8]*Dacca Review*, 1920.
[9]Mookerji, R.K., *The Gupta Empire*, pp. 105, 108, 122-23.
[10]Basak, *HNEI*, p. 78.
[11]Sinha, *DKM*, p. 80.
[12]Beal, Samuel, *Buddhist Record of the Western World*, I, pp. 165-72; Watters, *Yuan Chwang*, I, pp. 288-99.
[13]Mookerji, *The Gupta Empire*, p. 105.
[14]Of Sārnāth Inscription, Sircar, *Select Ins.*

Vainyagupta of the Gunaighar Grant was a contemporary of Narasiṁhagupta Bālāditya. His genealogy runs thus:

Skandagupta
(Brother)
|
Purugupta
(Sons)

Kumāragupta II (473 AD)	Budhagupta (476 AD)	Narasiṁhagupta Bālāditya (495 AD)

(His contemporary—Vainyagupta)
|
Kumāragupta III
|
Vishṇugupta

A controversy still remains regarding the genealogical position of Kumāragupta of the Sārnāth inscription and Kumāragupta of the Bhitari Seal; and Narasiṁhagupta, son of Purugupta and Bālāditya (alias Narasiṁhagupta Bālāditya) of Hiuen-Tsiang and the conqueror of Mihirakula and the father of Prakaṭāditya. From the point of view of gold content and other stylistic consideration the coins of Kumāragupta and Narasiṁhagupta can be classified into two groups which also corroborate the epigraphic and literary traditions. Thus, these were Kumāragupta II and Kumāragupta III and Narasiṁhagupta Bālāditya I and Narasiṁhagupta Bālāditya II[1] who was also the father of Prakaṭāditya.[2] The above analysis is partly corroborated by the Chinese account. Thus, in connection with the list of patrons of the Nālandā Mahāvihāra, the *Si-yu-ki*,[3] the life[4] of *Hiuen-Tsiang*, and *She-Kia-fang-che*[5] have placed Bālāditya before

[1]Ref. (i) Sārnāth Inscription of Kumārgupta II, Sircar, *Select Ins.*
(ii) Bhitari Seal of Kumārgupta III.
(iii) Sārnāth Inscription of Prakaṭāditya (Prakāṭditya), Fleet, *CII*, III, pp. 284-85.—Bālādityas and vide, Altekar, *Coinage*, pp. 266-70; Allan, *BMCGD*, p. civ; Sinha, *BKM*, p. 68.

[2]Ref. *Ārya-Manjuśrī-Mulakalpa.*

[3]Watters, *Yuan Chwang*, II, pp. 164-65; Beal, *Buddhist Record of the Western World*, II, p. 168.

[4]Beal, Samuel, *The Life of Hiuen-Tsiang*, pp. 110-11.

[5]Chattopadhyaya, *EHNI*, p. 183.

Vajra but definitely after Sakraditya (Kumāragupta I), Buddhagupta (Budhagupta), and Tathāgatarāja (another name of Budhagupta).

The Nālandā Seal of Vishṇugupta[1] has further explained the genealogy of the Imperial Gupta. Vishṇugupta was the grandson of Narasiṁhagupta II and the son of Kumāragupta III. They were, thus, in the following chronological order:

Narasiṁhagupta Bālāditya II
(son)
|
Kumāragupta III
(son)
|
Vishṇugupta

After a careful analysis of materials from all available sources S.R. Goyal[2] has thrown some new light on the Gupta genealogical problems specially from the reign of Kumāragupta II. Kumāragupta II, son of Narasiṁhagupta Bālāditya I, "Ascended the throne as a minor in or shortly before 473 AD and ruled only for a few years; for we find Budhagupta another son of Purugupta ruling the earth in 476 AD."[3] He further clarifies that "Buddhagupta, the younger brother of Narasiṁhagupta contested the throne after the death of his brother and ultimately succeeded in seizing it from Kumāragupta II, his own nephew in or shortly before 476 AD."[4] In the course of analysing the facts of Gupta history, he further suggests that "Budhagupta was succeeded in turn by Chandragupta III, Vainyagupta and Bhānugupta." Chandragupta III was perhaps the son of Budhagupta and Chandragupta III was perhaps succeeded by his son Vainyagupta at about 507 AD and Bhānugupta might have occupied the throne after him. Bhānugupta was succeeded in turn by Narasiṁhagupta Bālāditya II,[5] Kumāragupta III, Karmāditya and Vishṇugupta Chandrāditya and this is also suggested

[1] *EI*, XXVI, p. 235.
[2] *HIG*, pp. 318-376.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 328.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 329.
[5] He defeated Mihirakula.

on the basis of numismatic and epigraphic evidences.[1] S.R. Goyal further explains that "Narasiṁhagupta Bālāditya II, who was the conqueror of Mihirakula, ruled sometime between 510 and 532 AD and after the short rule of Vajra, was followed by Kumāragupta III and Vishṇugupta Chandrāditya, the last emperor of this dynasty."[2]

On the basis of our above discussion, we may draw up the following genealogical table:

Genealogical Table of the Gupta Rulers

(1) Śrī-Gupta (or Gupta)
(2) Ghaṭotkachagupta
(3) Chandragupta I=Kumāradevī
(4) Samudragupta=Dattadevī

(5) Rāmagupta (alias Kachagupta)		(6) Chandragupta II= Dhruvadevī; Kuberanāga
Prabhāvatī-gupta	Gavinda-gupta	(7) Kumāragupta I= Anantadevī
Ghaṭotkachagupta	(8) Purugupta= Chandrādevī	(9) Skandagupta
(10) Narasiṁhagupta I=Mitradevī (Bālāditya)		(12) Budhagupta
(11) Kumāragupta II		(13) Chandragupta III
		(14) Vainyagupta
	(15) Bhānugupta*	
	(16) Prakāśāditya	
	(17) Narasiṁhagupta II (Bālāditya)	
(18) Vajra (?Prakāśāditya)		(19) Kumāragupta III
		(20) Vishṇugupta

*Bhānugupta's place in the above table is rather uncertain. The chronological order is generally referred to by the numerical figures against their names.

[1]Altekar, *Coinage*; Allan, *BMCGD*; Nālandā seal of Vishṇugupta and *Ārya-Manjuśrī-Mūlkalpa*.

[2]Goyal, *HIG*, p. 376.

DECLINE AND FALL OF THE GUPTA EMPIRE

Causes of Decline

Broadly speaking, after the Mauryas the second great Magadhan empire was established by the valour and intelligence of the Great Guptas; but within two-hundred and fifty years such a great empire in northern India paled into insignificance. The reasons for its rapid decline and fall are not far to seek. H. C. Raychaudhuri rightly remarks: "The same causes were at work which proved so disastrous to the Turkī Sultanate of Delhi in the fourteenth century, and to the so-called Mughal Empire in the eighteenth, *viz.*, outbreak of rebellions within, devastating invasions from without, the growth of a class of hereditary governors and other officials who commanded enormous influence in local centres and assumed the titles of Mahārājā and Mahārājādhirāja, and dissensions in the imperial family itself."[1]

Towards the close of the reign of Kumāragupta I, his kingdom became involved "in a serious distress by a war with a rich and powerful nation, named, Pushyamitras." But this danger was averted by his son Skandagupta. The severity of the struggle is carefully recorded in his Bhitari Stone Pillar inscription.[2] Skandagupta was obliged to spend a night sleeping on the bare ground in the course of his campaign against them. But a much more serious danger which shook the very foundation of the Gupta empire, came immediately after the crushing defeat of the Pushyamitras. The Hūṇas "carried devastation over the smiling plains and crowded cities of India" and even the westernmost province of the Gupta empire fell to them. The young prince, Skandagupta proved equal to the situation and "inflicted upon the barbarions a defeat so decisive that India was saved for a time. His mother still lived, and to her the hero hastened with the news of his victory, "just as Krishṇa, when he had slain his enemies betook himself to his mother Devakī."[3]

But after the death of Skandagupta all the obstacles standing in the way of the Hūṇa invaders were removed. Arnold Toynbee

[1]*PHAI.*
[2]Fleet, *CII*, III.
[3]Smith, *EHI*, pp. 326-27.

rightly calls it *post-Indic Volkerwanderung*[2], when the Gupta empire was, again, shaken to its roots by Toramāṇa and Mihirakula during the reigns of Budhagupta, Bhānugupta and Narasiṁhagupta Bālāditya II and ültimately the invaders succeeded in penetrating into the heart of the Gupta empirẹ and for a time reduced it to mere vassalage.

While the foreign invaders were gradually advancing towards the centre, the insubordination and rebellions of the provincial governors accelerated the process of disintegration. One of the great defects of Gupta administration was the existence of hereditary governorships in different provinces. Sometimes the princes of royal blood, called Kumārāmātyas, used to govern the provinces (Deśas or Bhūktis). The provinces were divided into Vishayas (districts). Each Vishaya was administered by a royal official known as Vishayapati who was generally appointed by the governor of the Bhukti;[3] and they were, thus, responsible to the governors and bound to oblige him in every possible way. These governors commanded great power and influence over their respective territories. They were not slow to take advantage of the general confusion that came in the wake of weak succession and constant strifes for succession to the throne and invasions in and outside India. Bhatarka, a chief of the Maitraka clan, established himself as an independent ruler in Saurashtra and its neighbourhood. Similarly, Yaśodharman of Malwa in 533 AD claims to have defeated "very mighty kings of the east and many (kings) of the north and his feet were worshipped by Mihirakula."[3] Moreover, the Pushyabhūtis of Thāneśvar and the Maukharis of Kanauj gradually achieved their independence at the cost of their Imperial Master. The Vaṅga countries and Kāmarupa gradually followed suit. This situation is further explained by B.P. Sinha in the following words:[4] "At least by the middle of the sixth century AD the mighty Gupta empire had gradually crumbled down, and as is very common in Indian history, various powers arose in the north and south to fill the power vacuum. The later Guptas, the Maukharis, Pushyabhūtis in Northern India, the Kalachuris and the Chālukyas in the

[1]Toynbee, Arnold, *The Study of History*, II, p. 131.
[2]*EI*, XV, p. 130, p. 5.
[3]Mandasor Inscriptions, Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 142.
[4]Sinha, *DKM*, pp. 130-31.

south came forward to compete for succession to the power of the Imperial Guptas."

The Gangetic valley was the economic nerve centre of Northern India, and was therefore its political hub as well. The trade of Northern India passed down the Gaṅgā to the sea-ports of Eastern India, and therefore with the disappearance of the Imperial Guptas by the first half of the 6th century, incessant sword-rattling went on among many ambitious powers, particularly the later Guptas, the Maukharis and the Kalachuris, to become masters of the rich Gangetic basin in order to control its vast trade and alluvial soil. It is clear from the history of India that the power that succeeds in getting mastery over the central Gangetic plain—Magadha particularly—ultimately extends its authority over the lower as well as the upper Gangetic valley, and makes itself predominant in Northern India and sometimes in Southern India as well. The southward push of the northern power has brought, as a reaction, a consequent challenge by the southern powers to preside over the destiny of Northern India. The activities of the Sātavāhanas, the Kalachuris, the Chālukyas, the Rāshṭrakūṭas, the Cholās and the Mārāthas (in the much later period) in Northern India may be considered as reactions against the offensive of the Mauryas, the Imperial Guptas, Harshavardhana, and the Great Mughals (in the much later period) south of the Vindhyas. "The Mauryas and the Imperial Guptas became paramount sovereigns over northern as well as large part of southern India from their centre in Magadha. Therefore, after the downfall of the Gupta empire, the Later Guptas (so called, to distinguish them from the Imperial Guptas), the Maukharis, etc. were anxious to succeed to the Imperial Gupta traditions and mastery over Northern India, particularly Magadha."[1]

But the foreign invasions, aggression from the south and the rebellions of the provincial governors could be checked by a capable and strong monarch. Based on sheer force the vast Gupta Empire could be maintained by force alone. But hereditary monarchy, as is well known, cannot provide an unbroken succession of equally talented monarchs. Such was the case with the Gupta rulers of Magadha. The later emperors of this

[1]Sinha, p. 131.

dynasty did not possess either the intellect or the military efficiency of Chandragupta I, Samudragupta, Chandragupta II, Kumāragupta I and Skandagupta. They were hopelessly ill-equipped to face the difficulties of the time; and fatricidal wars for the throne were perhaps common to them.

After the death of Budhagupta at the fag-end of the sixth century AD, the process of feudalization of the state-structure accelerated and eventually became a serious threat to the very existence of the empire, specially after the third Hūṇa invasion. But, partly due to the influence of the Buddhist ideology which turned away the attention of the Gupta emperors from the conquest of the world and directed it to the cultivation of religious virtues, and partly due to the internal dissensions which led to the murder of several emperors in quick succession. The Imperial family could not meet this challenge successfully.

From the combined evidence of the contemporary epigraphs and coins, interpreted in the light of the testimony of the *Ārya-Mañjuśrī-Mūlakalpa*, it appears that Budhagupta himself surrounded on all sides by enemies, was suppressed and killed.[1] He was succeeded by Chandragupta III (? Vikramāditya) who was probably the son of the former and was severed by weapons. Vainyagupta Dvādaśāditya, the son of Chandragupta III also 'lived only for a few months' and then was 'severed by weapon'. It was against the background of these bloody internal political strifes of the Imperial family that the Hūṇas invaded the country for the third time. This invasion was certainly very fierce, and very soon it became apparent that only a ruler of the calibre of Skandagupta could save the situation for the empire."[2] All these forces considerably weakened the Central authority, and finally the fate of the Empire was doomed.

History of Decline

During the period of decline of the great Gupta empire we are not surprised to note the sweeping changes in the political and administrative set up affected by the Hūṇa invadors, on the one hand, and a fearful competition of the provincial governors and others to establish new kingdoms at the cost of the Gupta

[1]Smith, *EHI*, p. 42.
[2]Goyal, *HIG*, pp. 330-36.

empire on the other. Thus, the interval between the decline and fall of the Gupta empire and the rise of the power of Thāneswar (alias Kanauj) under the leadership of Harshavardhana at the beginning of the seventh century AD was a period of anarchy and confusion. Several independent kingdoms emerged on the ruins of the Gupta empire. They acknowledged no paramount power and were often at war with one another. Among them the Maitrakas of Valabhi, Aulikaras of Mālwa, Gurjaras of Rajputana, Maukharis of Kanauj, Later Guptas of Magadha, Gauḍas of Bengal and the Varmaṇs of Kāmarupa were important.

Maitrakas of Valabhi

Bhaṭārka was one of the Gupta generals of the Maitraka clan and was the governor of Saurashtra region for some time.[1] His son, Dharasena was also a general *(senapati)* of the Guptas. He was succeeded by his younger brother, Droṇasiṁha and apparently appreciating his valuable service to the empire the Gupta overlord conferred on him the title and responsibility of Mahārāja. His successor was Mahārāja Dhruvasena I who ruled his kingdom at least from 525 to 545 AD (GE 206 to 226). He maintained his allegiance to the Gupta overlord. Hence he assumed the subordinate titles of *Mahārāja*, *Mahāsamanta*, *Mahāpratihāra*, *Mahādaṇḍanāyaka* and *Mahākārtrākṛitika*. His successor was his younger brother Mahārāja Dharapatta who was succeeded by his son Mahārāja Guhasena (556 or 559 to 567 AD).

Mahārāja Guhasena did not use the common epithet, *parama-bhaṭṭarakapādānudhyata* which was used by his father and grand-father. This suggests the final overthrow of the Gupta suzerainty at least from the reign of Guhasena and it took place from 475 AD to 550 AD.[2] He was, then, succeeded by his son and grand-son, Dharasena II and Śilāditya I Dharmāditya who ruled the Valabhi kingdom from 571 to 612 AD. The extension of the Valabhi kingdom was also noticed by Hiuen-Tsiang.[3] Śilāditya I was, perhaps, succeeded by his nephew Dhruvasena II in 640 AD. As noticed by the Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen-Tsiang, Valabhi

[1]Majumdar and Pusalker, *The Classical Age*, p. 60.
[2]*Ibid*, p. 62.
[3]Watters, *Yuan Chwang*, II, p. 242.

kingdom attained the power of suzerainty over others in western India. According to Hiuen-Tsiang, Śilāditya I (Dharmāditya) was a "monarch of great administrative ability and of rare kindness and compassion" and he built a Buddhist temple "extremely artistic in structure and ornament."

Aulikaras of Mālwā

The heroic deeds of Yaśodharman are recorded in his Mandasor inscription.[1] One of them is dated in 532 AD (=Mālawā year 589) and it bears the famous *aulikara* crest.[2] The Varmaṇ kings of Mandasor belonged to the *aulikara* lineage.[3] It is, thus, suggested that he might have had some connection with them. His Mandasor inscription states that he conquered "those countries—which were not enjoyed (even) by the Gupta Lords, and which the command of the chiefs of the Hūṇas—failed to penetrate" and further, that the chiefs "from the neighbourhood of the (river) Lauhitya upto (the mountain) Mahendra......(and) from (Himalayas)......upto the Western Ocean", paid respect to his feet.[4] The mighty Hūṇa ruler Mihirakula was forced to pay him homage "by touching his feet with the forehead."[5] R. G. Basak suggests that "the complete overthrow of the Imperial Gupta power, of both the main and the branch lines, was in all probability brought about not by the foreigners, the Hūṇas, but by the ambitious chief Yaśodharman of Mālwā."[6] But his Mandasor inscription is purely a *praśasti* type of record and D. C. Sircar[7], suggests that his account is more or less a conventional one. At the same time it cannot be denied that "such a claim, publicly made, must have some basis in fact."[8] It cannot be, however, denied that he defeated the Hūṇa king, Mihirakula. The weak Gupta ruler, Vajra, the son of Narasiṁhagupta Bālāditya II, "could not resist his onslaught and Yaśodharman carried his victorious arm right upto the banks of Lauhitya and

[1]Gupta Inscription, nos. 33, 34, 35; Fleet, *CII*, III.
[2]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 155.
[3]*EI*, XXVI, p. 130; cf. Majumdar and Altekar, *VGA*, p. 202.
[4]Fleet, *CII*, III, pp. 147-48.
[5]*Ibid.*
[6]Basak, *HNEI*, p. 97.
[7]Sircar, *Studies in Geography of Ancient and Medieval India*, p. 10.
[8]Majumdar and Altekar, *VGA*, p. 203.

was, therefore, felt justified in assuming"[1] the titles of *Parameśvara*, *Rājādhirāja* and *Samrāṭ*. We, however, know little about his ancestors or successors; but his meteoric success kept his name alone like a shining star.

The Gurjaras of Rajputana

Taking full advantage of the declining power of the Imperial Guptas by the middle of the sixth century AD, the Gurjaras established their kingdom in the heart of Rajputana near Jodhpur. Harichandra was the earliest ruler of his dynasty. He was a Brāhmin by caste and was well-versed in the Vedas and in other *Śāstras*. In the opinion of R.C. Majumdar[2], in his early life Harichandra followed peaceful Brāhmaṇical pursuits, but during the break up of the Gupta empire and after the fall of Mihirakula, like many others, he gave up peaceful habits and took up a military career. He was finally able to establish a kingdom with his capital at Mandavyapura (Mandor, north of Jodhpur). He had four sons by queen Bhadrā, *viz.*, Bhogabhata, Kakka, Rajjila and Dadda. He was probably succeeded by his third son Rajjila who had his capital at Mandavyapura. But his son and successor Narabhaṭa and his grand-son Nāgabhata fixed their capital at Medantaka (Merta, north-east of Jodhpur). Harichandra and his successors ruled their kingdom between *c.* 550 AD and 640 AD.

The Gurjaras of Nandipuri

Among the four sons of Harichandra, Dadda I ruled the principality of Bhṛigukachchha (or Broach). All the earliest records have been discovered from Nandipuri which was perhaps his capital city. Dadda I claims to have defeated some hostile Nāgas. Dadda and his successors were Sāmantas (or feudatories) and that means that "they owed allegiance to the main Gurjara ruling family in Rajputana or to the Chalukyas."[2] He was succeeded by his son Vitarāga Jayabhaṭa I who was, again, succeeded by his son Dadda II Praśāntarāga. From his dated records it is certain that he ruled from 629 AD to 641 AD. His empire extended from the river Mahi in the north to the Kim

[1]Goyal, *HIG*, p. 236.
[2]Majumdar and Pusalker, *The Classical Age*, p. 65.

in the south, and from the sea-coast in the west to the borders of Mālwā on the east.[1]

Kingdom of Sthāneśvar

The kingdom of Sthānveśara (mod. Thaneswar) was situated in the country called Śrīkaṇṭha and it was founded by Pushpabhūti. His successors Naravardhana, Rājyavardhana, Ādityavardhana were all Mahārājas and they were all subordinate rulers. Mahārājādhirāja Prabhākaravardhana was the first independent ruler of this dynasty and he ruled from about 580 AD to 606 AD.[2] He had two sons and one daughter, *viz.* Rājyavardhana, Harshavardhana and Rājyaśrī. The first three rulers of this dynasty ruled from about 500 AD to 580 AD as feudatories ruling under the Guptas or the Hūṇas or both, at different times.[3] The House of Thaneswar, under Prabhākaravardhana rapidly rose to prominence, and was destined to play an important part in North Indian politics under Harsha-vardhana.

The Maukharis of Kanauj

The family of the Maukharis was even known to Paṇiṇi. The Harāhā inscription of Īshāṇa-varman[4] claimed their descent from the solar race. It appears from the Barābar and Nāgārajuni Hill Cave inscriptions[5] that an earlier branch of the Maukhari family lived in the Gayā district of Bihar and three of their rulers, Yajñavarman, Śārdulavarman and Anantavarman ruled their kingdom as feudatories of the Imperial Guptas.[6] But we do not know how this branch of the Maukharis came to an end.

Another branch of the Maukharis who had established themselves in Uttar Pradesh by the beginning of the sixth century AD, had their capital at Kanauj.[7] The first three rulers of this dynasty were Mahārāja Harivarman, his son Mahārāja Ādityavarman and grandson Mahārāja Īśvaravarman and were the feudatories of the Imperial Gupta rulers. They gradually achiev-

[1]Majumdar and Pusalker, *The Classical Age*, p. 66.
[2]*Ibid*, p. 97.
[3]*Ibid.*
[4]*EI*, XIV, p. 110.
[5]Fleet, *CII*, III, no. 48-50.
[6]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 221.
[7]Tripathi, R.S., *History of Kanauj*, p. 24; Sinha, *DKM*, p. 145.

ed political independence and great power by means of matrimonial alliances with the contemporary royal families. Ādityavarman married Harashaguptā, a sister of the Later Gupta king Harshagupta; similarly Īśvaravarman married Upaguptā, probably a sister of the Gupta ruler Vishṇugupta. Very probably Īśvaravarman rendered substantial help to the Gupta emperor in the latter's war with the Hūṇas and Yaśodharman.

Īśvaravarman was succeeded by his son Mahārājādhirāja Īśānavarman (*c* 550-576) who was the first independent ruler of this dynasty. According to the Harsha inscription he was ruling in full glory in 554 AD. He claims to have defeated the Andhras, Sulikas and the Gauḍas. These probably refer respectively to the Vishṇukuṇḍins, the Sulkis of Orissa and some ruling powers of Bengal."[1] He also vindicated his imperial power by issuing coins. Thus, the Maukharis by 554 AD replaced the Gupta authority in the upper Gangetic plain which became the seat of imperial power of Harśavardhana of Thaneswar in the seventh century.

Mahārājādhirāja Sarvavarman (*c* 576-580 AD) was the son and successor of Īśānavarman; and like the worthy son of his father he continued his family struggle against the Later Guptas in right earnest. The Āphsad inscription of Ādityasena informs us that Damodaragupta, fell in a battle against "the proudly stepping array of mighty elephants belonging to the Maukhari" who had also "thrown aloft in battle the troops of the Hūṇas."[2] Probably his campaign against the Hūṇas was a sort of help to his western neighbour from the House of Thaneswar who were anxious to crush the power of the Hūṇas. The relation between the two royal houses of Kanauj and Thaneswar was connected by a matrimonial alliance. Prince Grahavarman married Rājyaśrī the daughter of Prabhākaravardhana.

Sarvavarman was succeeded by Avantivarman (*c* 580-600) who was succeeded by his son Grahavarman. His marriage with Rājyaśrī, daughter of Prabhākaravardhana. The Maukhari-Pusyabhūti alliance was a diplomatic move against the Later Guptas. Probably the Later Gupta king Debagupta formed a counter-alliance with the Gauḍa king, Śaśāṅka. They attacked

[1]Majumdar and Pusalker, *The Classical Age*, p. 68.
[2]*Ibid.*

and killed Grahavarman and made his wife, Rājyaśrī, a prisoner. But she was subsequently rescued by his younger brother, Harshavardhana who later on united the Houses of Thaneswar and Kanauj under the same banner and Kanauj became his capital.

Later Guptas of Magadha

Like the Maukharis of Kanauj, the Later Guptas of Magadha were at first feudatories to the Imperial Guptas; but they became prominent afterwards. From the Āphsad inscription of Ādityasena we have the following genealogical table:

1. Kṛishṇagupta	5. Dāmodaragupta
2. Harshagupta	6. Mahāsenagupta
3. Jivitagupta	7. Mādhavagupta
4. Kumāragupta	8. Ādityasena

The founder of this dynasty was Kṛishṇagupta who was simply known as *nṛipa* (king); similarly the first three rulers, such as Kṛishṇagupta, Harshagupta, Jivitagupta were all *nṛipatis* (Kings) and subordinate rulers of the Imperial Guptas. The fourth ruler Kumāragupta was the first independent ruler of this dynasty; and he claimed to have defeated the Maukhari king Īśānavarman and conquered the countries possessed by the Imperial Guptas. In course of a further advance towards Prayāg, he died. He was succeeded by Dāmodaragupta who was also engaged in hostilities against the Maukharis and probably died in course of fighting against them.

He was succeeded by Mahāsenagupta who was intelligent enough to give his sister (Mahāsenagupta) in marriage to Prabhākaravardhana of Thaneswar. This diplomatic marriage alliance helped him a great deal in establishing his position in western, north-eastern India. He, thus, claimed to have defeated Susthitavarman of Kāmarūpa. At the same time, the Maitraka king Śilāditya I of Valabhi and the Kalachuri king Saṅkaragana dispossessed the Later Guptas from western India. However, the fate of Mahāsenagupta ended in tragedy; and his two sons, Kumāragupta and Mādhavagupta had to take shelter at the court of Prabhākaravardhana.

One Devagupta of Mālwā formed an alliance with the Gauḍa king Śaśāṅka, but his relationship with Mahāsenagupta is not known. R.C. Majumdar suggests that Mahāsenagupta

was "a member of a collateral branch" and he re-established the Later Gupta power again in Mālwā.[1] Devagupta and Śaśāṅka then attacked and killed Grahavarman of Kanauj and made his queen, Rājyaśrī, a prisoner.

Kingdoms and Kings of Bengal

The Great Gupta empire faded into insignificance roughly about the middle of the sixth century AD. Many independent dynasties arose in different parts of northern India. Three plates of the period have been discovered from the Faridpur district in Bengal.[2] It is recorded there that Mahārāja Gopachandra, Dharmāditya and Samāchāradeva apparently ruled that part of Bengal. On paleographic grounds these inscriptions can be placed in the sixth century AD.[3] It is also suggested in the Haraha[4] inscription of 554 AD that Īśānavarman of the Maukhari dynasty "compelled the Gauḍas to take shelter on the sea shore." Again, the Chālukya king, Kirtivarman, son of Pulakeśin I, claimed to have defeated the kings of Aṅga, Vaṅga, and Kaliṅga.[5] But it is very difficult for us to know the identity of the king defeated by him. Moreover, the Vappaghoshavaṭa grant[6] records the donation of land of Bhaṭṭa Brahmaviraśvamin by Sāmanta Nārāyanabhadra who was an official of Mahārāja Jayanāga. The grant was issued from Karṇasuvarṇa. R.G. Basak[7] is inclined to place Jayanāga before Śaśāṅka.

Reign of Śaśāṅka

When Prabhākaravardhana of Thaneswar was rapidly extending the boundaries of his kingdom, a new power under the leadership of Śaśāṅka arose in Bengal. Śaśāṅka played a very significant role in the struggle for supremacy in north Indian politics. Apparently he became the king of Gauḍa towards the close of the sixth century AD. He was a military adventurer like Yaśodharman of Mālwā.[8] We know nothing about their prede-

[1]Majumdar and Pusalker, *The Classical Age*, p. 75.
[2]Sircar, *Select Ins.*, p. 350.
[3]*Ibid.*
[4]*EI*, XIV, p. 110.
[5]Mahākuta Inscription, *IA*, XIX, p. 16.
[6]*EI*, XVIII, p. 60.
[7]Basak, *HNEI*, p. 139.
[8]Mandasor Inscription: Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 146.

cessors and successors. They rose and vanished like meteors leaving behind their splendid military glory. But the contemporary records give details of Śaśāṅka's career and achievements. Bāṇabhaṭṭa calls him the ruler of Gauḍa, and Hieun-Tsiang describes him as the ruler of Karaṇasuvarṇa.

In the Rohtasgarh seal-matrix[1] his name is recorded as "Śrī-Mahāsāmanta Śaśāṅkadevasya" (*i.e.* "of the illustrious great vassal Śaśāṅka"). It may, therefore, be conjectured that Śaśāṅka at first began his career as a subordinate chieftain ruling under Avantivarman of the Maukhari dynasty or Mahāsenagupta of the Later Gupta dynasty.[2] The Harāhā inscription of Īśānavarman[3] and the Deo-Bārānak inscription of Jivītagupta II[4] record the supremacy of Īśānavarman, Sarvavarman and Avantivarman over Bihar. Again, the Āpshad inscription of Ādityasena[5] refers to his grand-father Mahāsenagupta's triumph over Suśthitavarman on the bank of Lauhitya. Suśthitavarman was the king of Kāmarūpa. Avantivarman and Mahāsenagupta were contemporaries of Śaśāṅka. He was, thus, the feudatory of one or other of the two.

According to Hiuen-Tsiang and Bāṇabhaṭṭa, he became the master of Gauḍa; and Karṇasuvarṇa was his capital. During his reign the political condition of northern India became complicated after the marriage of Rājyaśrī, the daughter of Prabhākaravardhana, with Grahavarman of Kanauj. The kingdom of Kanauj and Thaneswar were, thus, united by a successful wedlock. In order to counteract this Śaśāṅka formed an alliance with Devagupta of Mālwā. They, then, jointly attacked Kanauj, and its ruler Grahavarman was defeated and killed in the battlefield. His wife, Rājyaśrī, was taken captive. His supremacy over Orissa is also proved by his Ganjām plates of 619 AD.[6]

The news of this victory reached Rājyavardhana of Thaneswar. He at once marched against Devagupta who was defeated by him. He, then, advanced towards Śaśāṅka. But Rājyavardhana

[1]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 284.
[2]*IHQ*, XII, P. 457; Majumdar, *History of Bengal*, I, p. 59; Sinha, *DKM*, pp. 222-23.
[3]*EI*, XIV, p. 110.
[4]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 213. (no. 46).
[5]*Ibid*, no. 42; *IHQ*, XII, p. 457.
[6]*EI*, VI, p. 143; *IHQ*, XII, p. 459; *EI*, XXIII, p. 197.

"was allured to confidence by false civilities on the part of the king of Gauḍa, and then weaponless, confiding, and alone despatched in his own quarters."[1] He was, thus, treacherously murdered by Śaśāṅka. This account is upheld by C.V. Vaidya,[2] R.G. Basak[3] and D.C. Ganguli.[4] The Chinese pilgrim also states, "Śaśāṅka addressed his ministers in these words, if a frontier country has a virtuous ruler, this is the unhappiness of the mother kingdom. On this they asked the king to a conference and murdered him."[5] Haraha's inscription records that "he (Rājyavardhana) gave up his life in his enemy's house owing to his adherence to his promise (*satyānurodhena*)."[6] But this is not accepted by R.P. Chandra, R.D. Banerjee and R.C. Majumdar.[7] In their opinion, Bāṇa and Hiuen-Tsang were biased against Śaṣāṅka who was against Buddhism and antagonistic to Harshavardhana. Bāṇa refers to Śaśāṅka as "the vile Gauḍa (*Gauḍadhama)*" or "the serpent of Gauḍa *(Gauḍa-Bhujaṅga)*." In their opinion, Rājyavardhana was defeated and killed in fair fight. Moreover, his Ganjām plate of 619 AD records the power of Śaśāṅka over Bengal and Orissa. Bengal passed into the hands of Harsha after the death of Śaśāṅka.[8]

Although Śaśāṅka had a very humble beginning, his name must be preserved in the annals of Bengal as the first great king of Bengal. He not only made Gauḍa a powerful state, but also extended his influence over the southern parts of Bihar and Orissa. He even attempted to dominate the north India politics by conquering the Mahodayaśrī (Kanauj) and forming an alliance with Devagupta of Mālwā.

Kingdom of Kāmarupa

In the fourth century AD Pushyavarman had established his kingdom in Kāmarupa. The first six kings of this dynasty

[1]Cowell, E.B., and Thomas, F.W., *Harshacharita*, p. 192.
[2]Vaidya, C.V., *History of Medieval India*, I, p. 4.
[3]Basak, *HNEI*, pp. 144-50.
[4]*IHQ*, XII, pp. 462-64.
[5]Beal, *Buddhist Record of the Western World*, I, pp. 210-11; Watters, *Yuan Chwang*, I, p. 343; Beal, *The Life of Hiuen-Tsiang*, p. 83.
[6]*EI*, VI, p. 210,
[7]*Gauḍarājamālā*, p. 8-10; Majumdar, *History of Bengal*, I, p. 17-18.
[8]Tripathi, R.S., *History of Kanauj*, Ch. IV and V.

acknowledged the suzerainty of the Imperial Guptas; but its seventh king threw off their yoke. However, in the middle of the 6th century AD under Bhūtiverman, Kāmrupa became a powerful state; which included the whole of the Brahmaputra valley. His successors claimed to have defeated the Later Gupta kings of Magadha. Bhāskaravarman of this dynasty formed an alliance with Harshavardhana of Kanauj. There was, thus the allied powers of Thaneswar, Kanauj and Kāmarupa against that of Bengal and Mālwā.

During the decline of the Gupta empire, many states emerged out of the remains of the great empire and all tried their best to establish their own paramountcy over northern India. At last at the beginning of the seventh century AD the centre of political gravity was shifted from Magadha to Kanauj. We no more hear of the glory of Magadha which had long heen the queen of northern India. But the main feature of the history of northern India in the fifth and the sixth centuries AD was the story of a series of wars of the Imperial Guptas, Yaśodharman, Later Guptas, Maukharis and others against the Hūṇas.

CHAPTER IV

THE GUPTA ADMINISTRATION

Indologists have always expressed a very high opinion about the achievements of the Gupta Age, which reached a high watermark of culture and civilization. It received its strength and vitality from the continuous rule of more than two centuries successively under Chandragupta I, Samudragupta, Chandragupta II, Kumaragupta I, Skandagupta and others. They profitably helped the progress of administration, at least in the major part of India.

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

Most of the ancient authorities[1] in matters relating to administration, such as Kauṭilya, Manu, Nārada, Brihaspati, Kāmandaka and Śukra, state that a state or Rājya is composed of seven elements, *viz.* Svāmin (ruler or sovereign), Amātya (minister), Janapada or Rāshṭra (the territory of the State and its people), Dūrga (fortified city or capital), Kośa (accumulated wealth in the ruler's treasury), Daṇḍa (army) and Mitra (friends or allies). These seven parts are generally considered as the constituents (aṅgas) of the body of the state or elements of sovereignty.

The King

The Gupta emperors discarded the modest title of Rājan used by the indigenous dynasties of earlier times. They adopted high-sounding titles or epithets like Parama-bhāgavata, Parama-bhaṭṭāraka, Parama-daivata, Achintya-Purusha, etc. as is evident

[1] *Kāmandakiya Nītisāra,* 1.16; *Śukra Nītisāra,* pp. 122-24; Kane, P.V., *HDS*, III, p. 17.

from most of the Gupta inscriptions and coins.[1] This indicates a great change in the conception of kingship in this period, which, to some extent at least, must have been due to the influence of the Indo-Greek, Kushaṇa, Śaka idea of kingship.

The Maurya king was a mortal, though a favoured mortal (Devanampriya).[2] But under the Guptas, kingship assumed a semi-divine character. In the Allahabad pillar inscription Samudragupta is referred to as a god dwelling on earth, and a mortal only in celebrating the rites of the observances of mankind.[3] He is also described as "equal to the gods Dhanada (Kubera), Varuna, Indra, and Antaka (Yama)", who had 'no antagonist of equal power in the world', and who was 'the battle-axe of the god Kritānta (Yama).'[4] With the same object of claiming superhuman excellence, the coin legends of the Gupta emperors refer to them as having 'acquired heaven by good deeds.'[5]

In the Gupta empire the king was the supreme head of the state and administration. Inscriptions show that the ideal of kingship in the Gupta Age was very much the same as found in the Smriti literature and in the works of Kālidāsa. The Bhiṭari pillar inscription referring to the qualities of Skandagupta states : 'He subdued the earth and became merciful to the conquered people, but he became neither proud nor arrogant though his glory was increasing day by day.'[6] Moreover, 'Samudragupta was kind to the miserable, the poor, the helpless and the afflicted.'[7] 'He had a sharp and polished intellect and musical accomplishment and had the title of the king of poets by various poetical compositions.'[8] The emperor also 'wants welfare and happiness of all existing beings.'[9] Sometimes, the 'Gupta king is called an exterminator of all kings.'[10] In one

[1]Smith, *EHI,* Allan, *BMCGD* and Altekar *CGC*; Fleet, *CII,* III; *EI*, XVII, p. 347; *EI*, XXI, p. 8.
[2]Hultzsch, *CII*, I, Inscription of Aśoka.
[3]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 6.
[4]*Ibid*, pp. 6, 53; Battle-axe coins of Samudragupta.
[5]*Ibid*, fn, p. 2.
[6]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 53.
[7]*Ibid*, p. 6.
[8]*Ibid.*
[9]*Ibid*, pp. 43, 49, 53; *EI*, XXI, p. 8 *(CGC)*.
[10]*Ibid.*

inscription Kumāragupta I is said to have 'followed the true path of religion.'[1] Thus Kāmandaka has rightly remarked: 'The king is the cause of the prosperity and progress of this world, and is held in high estimation even by the aged men. He also affords delight to the eyes of men.'[2]

The Gupta kings were highly influenced by the stories and legends embodied in the Epics and the Purāṇas. They were very often compared to the famous characters of the two Epics. In respect of strength and valour Samudragupta, Chandragupta II, Kumāragupta I and others are often compared to Indra, Yama (Kritānta) and Kārttikeya[3] as already mentioned. Moreover, the high ideals of the two great Epics often guided the attitude of the king towards his subjects. In kindness Samudragupta and Kumāragupta I were equal to Dhanada and Varuṇa.[4] They were the givers of millions of lawfully acquired cows and gold. In their adherence to truth and moral attainments their aim was to be as famous as Yudhisthira.[5] It is also recorded that "Skandagupta subdued the earth and became merciful even to the conquered people in distress."[6]

Some of the Gupta kings were experts in diplomacy. Samudragupta, for instance, presumably knowing the limitations of a northern power, thought it prudent to reinstate the conquered kings of the Dakshināpatha.[7] Kālidāsa has probably in his mind a Gupta king of this type when he states that Dilīp was very intelligent in state-craft and diploma.[8] The necessity of a sound diplomatic training on the part of a sovereign is emphasized in the *Nītisāra* of Kāmandaka.

Dr. Beni Prasad remarks that 'it was not long before public opinion and political philosophy held up to admiration the ideal of "the big kingdom", "the kingdom extending upto the sea", "the universal dominion." Constant efforts were made to realize the ideal in some practical form or other in reality or

[1] *Ibid*, p. 43.
[2] *Kāmandakiya Nītisāra*, 1.9.
[3] Fleet, *CII*, III, pp. 6, 43, 49; their gold coins.
[4] *Ibid*.
[5] Refer *Gupta Inscription*.
[6] Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 53.
[7] *Ibid*, p. 6.
[8] *Raghuvaṁśa*, I, 20.

in name.[1] The Gupta inscriptions very often mention this ideal and the kings of this dynasty sought to achieve the 'universal empire.'[1] As a result of their great military conquests, the good names of Samudragupta, Chandragupta II, Kumaragupta I and Skandagupta were 'tested by the waters of the four oceans.'[3] 'They had no antagonists of equal power in the world.'[4] The kingdom of Skandagupta was 'bounded by the waters of the four oceans.'[5] Similar exaggerated statements occur frequently in the epigraphic records of the Gupta kings.

Besides the proper maintenance of law and order in the State, it was always considered the duty of the Hindu rulers to support the Brahmanas, Śramanas and others to hold assemblies of poets and learned men, to make gifts of land to religious and educational institutions and to advance learning in every possible way. Not only did great kings like Samudragupta, Chandragupta II, Kumaragupta I and Skandagupta endow lands and money for Brahmanas, Buddhist and Jainas, but even the lesser kings like Buddhagupta, Vainyagupta and others continued this practice.[6] Thus, the spirit of toleration and respect for other religions are the keynotes of the Gupta Age.

The Gupta kings were the great patrons of art, science and literature. Samudragupta himself was 'the king of poets.'[7] In the field of literature Śudraka, Viśākhadatta and others of lesser repute were outshone by the brilliancy of Kālidāsa, who has been called by Rawlinson 'the Indian Shakespeare.' In the field of mathematics and astronomy, the Gupta Age produced such scientists as Āryabhatta and Varāhamihira. Under the steady patronage of the Gupta kings the different branches of art reached a remarkable level of excellence. Music also received state help, especially under Samudragupta.[8] The kindred arts of architecture, sculpture and painting exhibit remarkable signs of physical beauty, dignity and gracefulness of pose, transparent

[1]Refer *State in Ancient India*, p. 4.
[2]Fleet, *CII*, III, pp. 6, 43, 53, 56, etc. (Refer *CGC* also.)
[3]*Ibid.*
[4]*Ibid.*
[5]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 53.
[6]Gupta Inscription and Coins (Aśwamedha coins etc.)
[7]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 6.
[8]Allan, *Lyrist Coins*; and Kālidāsa's *Mālavikāgnimitra.*

robes, elaborate haloes and wigs.

The king was always expected to rule the kingdom according to the laws of the sacred texts and Gupta inscriptions, and the contemporary literature very often mentions this fact. Perhaps all the Gupta kings did not possess all the requisite qualities in the same degree. There is no doubt that king like Chandragupta I, Samudragupta, Chandragupta II, Kumaragupta I, Skandagupta and others had qualities of statesmanship, heroism, self-reliance and intelligence. This is evident from their achievements both in the political and other fields. Especially in ancient India, the fate of a dynasty largely depended on the personality of the king, and the reign of a king not having the necessary qualities often caused disaster. This must account for the misfortunes which overtook the Gupta dynasty during the reigns of the successors of Skandagupta.

Besides being the administrative (civil) head of the State, the king was the leader of his army.[1] It was he who settled the military policy and in various ways took a leading part in the struggles for supremacy or for the preservation of the empire.[2] The supreme control which the king exercised over his army was of great importance in the Gupta State. Samudragupta's brilliant campaigns in Āryāvarta and the Dakshināpatha bear unmistakable testimony to his greatness as a military leader.[3] His son and successor, Chandragupta II, also launched many successful campaigns against the Śakas, Balhikas and others.[4] Skandagupta, the last great ruler of this dynasty, saved the Gupta empire from the attacks of the Hūṇas and the Pushyāmitras.[5] No doubt the king was assisted by his minister of war and peace as well as the high military officials in carrying out war operations. But the final decision regarding tactics and strategy must have rested primarily with the king.[6]

The most typical of the royal titles, Mahārājādhirāja, adopted by the Gupta kings, appear alike in their inscriptions, coins and

[1]*Gupta Inscription* and *Raghuvaṁśa.*

[2]Fa-hien, p. 57 *(Record of the Buddhist Countries*, published by Chinese Buddhist Association, Peking, 1957*)*.

[3]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 6.

[4]*Ibid*, pp. 25, 141.

[5]*Ibid*, pp. 53, 58.

[6]Fleet, *CII*, III, pp. 6, 25. 53, 58, 141 refer *Raghuvaṁśa.*

seals. They always prefer high-sounding titles as previously mentioned. Titles such as Sarvarājochchhetta, Vyaghraparākrama, Parākramāṅka, Apratiratha, etc. were not uncommon. The assumption of these was quite in consonance with the extraordinary power which the king exercised in all spheres of administration.

The king had absolute authority over all the affairs of the State, but, like other rulers of ancient India, the Gupta king had a council of ministers to assist him. In military and foreign affairs he was certainly assisted by the Senāpati and the minister for war and peace.

Chief Queen: Crown Prince

Only the chief queen in the Gupta Age was designated as Mahādevī. The Allahabad pillar inscription refers to Mahādevī Kumāradevī, the wife of Chandragupta I and the mother of Samudragupta. Dhruvadevī, Anantadevī, Chandradevī and others were also Mahādevīs. They had some influence over the administration of the country. Throughout his long reign Chandragupta I issued gold coins jointly in the name of himself and of Kumāradevī.[1] Her importance in the State can be noticed from a number of Gupta inscriptions. For long years Prabhāvatī Gupta ruled the Vākāṭaka kingdom as a prince regent. Moreover, the Gupta queens had the power of bestowing lands and granting money to religious institutions.[2] In ceremonies like Aśvamedha and others, the chief queen along with the king always played a very significant role.[3]

Next in rank to the emperor stood the Crown prince. Succession in the Gupta empire was confined to hereditary descent in the male line and generally the eldest son used to succeed his father. But the principle of primogeniture was not always followed. Chandragupta I had probably more than one son, but he selected Samudragupta as his successor (Yuvarāja).[4] Chandragupta I seems to have been helped by his able son in warfare and possibly also in some administrative matters, as was the vogue in

[1]Smith, *EHI*; Allan, *BMCGD (Chandragupta-Kumāradevi Coins)*; Maity, *ELGP*, Appendix III.

[2]*EI*, XV, p. 41; *JASB (NS)*, XX, p. 58 etc.

[3]*Aśwamedha Coins.*

[4]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 6.

ancient Egypt. The training of Samudragupta as Yuvarāja may have been of great use to him in building up a great empire in course of time.

Ministers and Other Officials

For the proper administration of the country the king was assisted by a group of ministers (mantrins). They were largely responsible for the general welfare of the State. The ancient law-givers generally state that ministership should be hereditary if the son was as capable as his father.[1] But according to the *Rājanītiprakāśa* the hereditary principle was to be given up if the son or grandson of a former minister had not the necessary qualifications, but such a descendant was to be appointed only in such state work as was suited to his attainments.[2] Thus, the practice of hereditary succession to ministerial posts was probably followed in the Gupta State if the son possessed requisite qualifications. Vīrasena-Sāba was the Sachiva-Samdhi-vigrahika of Chandragupta II. He held the position acquired by hereditary descent.[3]

As regards their qualifications, the ministers of a monarch 'should be high-born, pure minded, heroic, learned, loyal and experts in the practical application of the science of polity.' And 'all the actions and omissions of a king should be examined by his ministers, who follow up his schemes until they are successful.'[4]

Their accomplishments are also recorded in the Gupta inscriptions. Vīrasena-Sāba, the minister of Chandragupta II, 'knows the meanings of words and logic and the ways of mankind.' In the important state affairs he had to give the king proper advice. While Chandragupta was engaged in military campaigns, Vīrasena accompanied the king up to Udayagiri from Pāṭaliputra.[5] Thus, it is assumed that he assisted the king in his Śaka campaigns in the west. There was perhaps no clear-cut division of the civil and military duties of the Gupta ministers, as in the days of Śivāji and his Ashta-Pradhāna. They were sometimes simply

[1]Kane, *HDS*, III, pp. 107-08.
[2]*Rājanītī*, p. 176.
[3]Fleet, *CII*, III, pp. 25, 35.
[4]*Kāmandaka*, IV, pp. 25-26.
[5]Fleet, *CII*, III, pp. 25, 35.

called ministers (high counsellors), Sāndhi-Vigrahika (minister for war and peace), Kumārāmātyas (cadet-minister), and Mantri-Kumārāmātyas.[1]

It is not, however, very clear from the Gupta inscriptions whether the Guptas had a Central Council of ministers (Mantrī-Parishad).[2] The Sabhyas,[3] mentioned in connection with the selection of Samudragupta by his father, may have been the members of the king's council (or the council of ministers). But we have some positive references to the council of ministers in the *Nītisāra* of Kāmandaka. Regarding the number of ministers of the council, 'Manu says twelve, Brihaspati says sixteen and Uśānas says twenty ministers should form a cabinet. Others again say that as many good and deserving counsellors as are available should be admitted to the cabinet. Duly entering the cabinet and with mind undivided, a king should hold counsel for facilitating the successor of an act or undertaking.'[4] Moreover, 'the king seeking his own welfare should discuss the subject of a consultation separately with each of his ministers. After that he should take into serious consideration the opinion of each by itself.'[5] Thus, in every matter, the king should consult his wise ministers.[6]

At the head of the judiciary stood the king himself. He was assisted by the Mahādaṇḍanāyaka.[7] Besides the royal court, there must have been courts for the administration of justice in the provinces and in the districts, and this work seems to have been entrusted to Uparikas and Vishayapatis respectively. Petty cases in villages were usually decided by the headman and the village elders. Fahien states that the king governs without decapitation or other corporal punishments. Criminals are simply fined, lightly or heavily, according to the circumstances of each case. Even in case of repeated attempts at rebellion they only have their right hands cut off.[8] But it is difficult to rely on his

[1]Raychaudhuri, *PHAI*, p. 471.

[2]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 44-The Bilsad Inscription refers to (Pa-) rshad.

[3]*Ibid*, p. 6.

[4]*Kāmandaka*, XI, pp. 74-75.

[5]*Ibid*, p. 77.

[6]*Ibid*, pp. 77-85.

[7]Fleet, p. 6; some scholars think that he was the chief military official of the State.

[8]Fa-hien, p. 35.

evidence in this matter, for many of his observations are either wrong or exaggerated.[1] Moreover, all our law-givers testify to the severity of the penal code.[2]

Mahāpratīhāra[3] was another high official of the state. He was undoubtedly the chief of the palace guards and of the royal bodyguards in particular.

The king had to maintain a great establishment for food. In the Maurya royal kitchen prior to Aśoka's conversion to Buddhism, several hundreds of animals were daily sacrificed for food and a group of officials must have been engaged for its management. Unfortunately further details regarding the kitchen staff are not available. But in a Gupta inscription mention is made of an officer designated Khādyatapakita who may have been the superintendent of the royal kitchen.

Espionage probably continued to form an important feature of the administrative system in the Gupta period. In the early period Megasthenes, Kauṭilya and Aśokan inscriptions have left an interesting account of the espionage system in the Maurya period

A class of men called overseers had to 'overlook what is done throughout the country and in the cities and make report to the king'.[4] Strabo calls them inspectors. He says: 'They are entrusted with the superintendence of all that is going on, and it is their duty to report privately to the king. The best and the most faithful persons are appointed to the office of inspectors.'[5]

It may not be wrong to suppose that the Gupta kings also realized the necessity of collecting secret information with the help of spies, although their inscriptions do not record any definite information about the espionage system. Kāmandaka, however, has discussed the topic quite exhaustively, which may show that espionage as a system was not unknown in his time.[6]

As regards the qualification of a Dūtaka (spy), 'a person skilled in the interpretation of internal sentiments by conjecture and by external gestures, accurate of memory, polite and soft in speech,

[1]Maity, S.K., *ELGP*, ch. III (at the end).
[2]Kauṭilya, Manu, Nārada, Brihaspati and others.
[3]Gunaighar grant of Vainyagupta, *IHQ*, VI, p. 53.
[4]Chinnock, Arrian, p. 413.
[5]Strabo, III, p. 103.
[6]*Kāmandakiya Nītisāra*, XII, pp. 1-49.

agile in movements, capable of bearing up with all sorts of privations and difficulties, ready-witted, and expert in everything, is fit to be a Dūtaka.'[1] Intelligent Dūtakas (spies) disguised as ascetics, traders, or artisans should go out in all directions to acquaint themselves with the public opinion on all matters. They should then report it to the king. Even they should be posted in enemies' country for the necessary information to their royal master. They are thus called 'the eyes of the king.'[2] We have a reference to Vijayasena as a Dūtaka (reporter or spy) of Vinayagupta.

Military Organization

The military department was a vital part of the Gupta administration. The early Guptas must have devoted special attention to the task of developing their military organization and resources and improving the efficiency of their army, which largely accounts for the great success of their policy of imperial expansion.

The Gupta emperor was, of course, the supreme head of the army. He was assisted by the *Saṁdhivigrahika*[3] who was the minister for war and peace. He was also helped by a group of high military officials.

The *Mahābalādhikrita*[4] was undoubtedly the commander-in-chief of the royal army. The royal army consisted of infantry, cavalry, navy and elephants. There was a very good standing army, drawing liberal and regular pay and supplied by the government with horse, army equipment and stores. Sometimes hired soldiers were also appointed to meet the special need of the time.[5]

There were two other important officials in the military department. The *Mahāpīlupati*[6] was the head of the elephant force and most probably the *Bhogika*[7] (keeper of horses) was in charge of the royal cavalry. The growing importance of cavalry is suppor-

[1] *Ibid*, XII, p. 25.
[2] *Ibid*, XII, pp. 26-27, 31-32 etc.
[3] Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 6.
[4] *EI*, XXV, p. 52; XXVI.
[5] *Nāradasmṛti*, V, p. 23; and *Bṛhaspati Smṛti* XV, p. 13.
[6] *EI*, XXV, p. 52; *IHQ*, VI, p. 53.
[7] *IHQ*, VI, p. 53.

ted by seals and inscriptions which speak of *aśvapati*, *mahāśvapati*, and *bhatāśvapati*' evidently the commander of horsemen.[1]

The army was equipped with various weapons, both offensive and defensive. Battle-axes, bows, and arrows, spears, pikes, barbed darts, swords, lances, javelines, iron arrows and many other weapons were used in warfare.[2]

The army thus organized proved extremely formidable and the military successes of Samudragupta, Chandragupta II, Kumāragupta I and Skandagupta bear ample testimony to its efficiency.

Land Administration and Royal Treasury

Land was the bed-rock of the Gupta economy. The main source of wealth and the chief support of life are India's rich soil, river system, mountain ranges and seas. That is why the Gupta emperors took special care of the land administration of the country.

The term *Akshapaṭalādhikrita* is generally interpreted as meaning the keeper of the royal records.[3] If he is the same as the Akshapaṭaladhyakṣa of Kauṭilya, his duty was to enter numerous matters in the accounts, recover the royal dues from the sureties or servants, to check embezzlement and to recover fines for loss due to neglect or fraud.[4] Though the function of the *Akshapaṭalādhikrita* cannot be definitely ascertained for lack of detailed information, it is probable that he had important duties connected with the land administration of the country.

Gopasvāmin was the *Akshapaṭalādhikrita* of Samudragupta. He ordered the royal scribe to inscribe the Gayā copper plate of the king.[5]

The more prominent high officials in the department of land administration were the *Pustapālas* (record-keepers) who had their offices at the centre as well as in the provinces and districts. They had to discharge various duties in connection with private and state lands. On the occasion of a land transaction the officer or the *Pustapāla* used to make necessary enquiries as to the ownership of the land particularly involved, the aim and object of

[1] *AISAR*, 1911-12, p. 53; 1903-4, p. 109.
[2] Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 6; Kālidāsa's Works.
[3] *EI*, XXV, p. 52; Sircar, *Select Ins.*, p. 264, fn. 7; Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 256.
[4] *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya, II, 7.
[5] Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 256; *EI*, XXV, p. 52.

the intending purchaser etc.) Sometimes there were more than one record-keeper[1] conducting such enquiries. But it was not arranged smoothly. Sometimes disagreement may have occurred. In one of the Dāmodarpur copper plates there is a case where there may have been a slight disagreement between the Viṣayapati and the Pustapālas. Apparently some objection might be raised either by the office of the Pustapalas or by the district governor. In a case where no objection was raised by any party the department of land records gave its consent to the proposed transaction.[2]

After the consent from the Pustapāla's department was received, the applicant used to pay the usual price in cash to the district office.[3] The plot was inspected by the Local Council. The land was then demarcated according to the standard measure. Finally, the City Council declared the sale as completed and had the transfer recorded in the usual form.[4]

(From a careful study of the contemporary inscriptions, it is quite clear that the State maintained a regular department for the proper survey and measurement of land as well as for the collection of land revenue.* In the three copper-plate grants[5] of Dharmāditya and Gopachandra mention is made of lands being measured by the length of the hasta of upright Śivachandra.) It is elsewhere stated that land was measured according to the length of the hasta of Darvikarma.[6] From these inscriptions it is quite clear that Śivachandra and Darvikarma were not record-keepers, for the record-keepers are separately mentioned.[7] They were probably the royal surveyors of land or officers in some way connected with the fiscal department of the king, for we see that in the three grants of Dharmāditya and Gopachandra only the measure of Sivachandra's hasta was accepted as a standard measure in a certain locality. The view that the length of the forearms of the officer was taken as the unit of land

*For the detailed treatment of land administration, land revenue, etc,, vide Maity, *ELGP*, pp. 9-70.

[1]Maity, *ELGP*, Appendix II.

[2]*EI*, XV, p. 143, pl. 5.

[3]*EI*, XV, p. 68, fn.

[4]*Ibid.*, XX, p. 59; Maity, *ELGP*, Appendix II.

[5]*IA*, 1910, p. 195. pls. A,B,C.

[6]*EI*, XXI, p. 82.

[7]Maity, *ELGP*, Appendix II.

measurement may not be acceptable everywhere. Śivachandra was apparently the keeper of the standard measuring rod used in the locality, and was officially responsible for land measurement.

Kāmandaka suggests that a monarch should take special care of his treasury, for the life of the state depends solely upon it.[1] His expenditure should not be extravagant and he should personally inspect the treasury. These principles were probably followed in our period, for we read in Kālidāsa of wealth being carried by hundreds of mules and camels from the royal treasury when Raghu donated fourteen crores of coins to a Brahmana.[2] This is certainly an exaggerated statement, yet there may be some truth in it, for we have seen that Samudragupta successfully launched vast campaigns over the major part of India.[3] These must have needed a sound treasury and a good army to back up his cause. It is also possible that his great southern expeditions had as their main motive the filling up of his treasury to provide resources for his more important expeditions in the west.

From the numerous references from the contemporary records it may be seen that land revenue formed the greatest source of wealth to the State. Generally speaking, the state claimed one-sixth of the produce of the land as its share. The state claimed it in return for the protection of life and property granted to it. This is called the subsistence allowance (Vṛtti) of the king. The account of Kālidāsa is fully corroborated by Nārada, who states that one-sixth of the produce of the soil forms the royal revenue. It is taken as the reward of the king for protection of his subjects.[4]

But no Gupta inscription directly states the proportion demanded in practice. But from the Baigram and the Pāhārpur copper plates,[5] which give to the king one-sixth of the religious merit accruing from a donation, we may assume that this proportion represented the standard rate in our period. Besides

[1]*Kāmandakiya Nītisāra*, V, p. 77; *Manusmṛti*. VII, p, 65; *Raghuvaṁśa*, XVII, pp. 60, 81.

[2]*Raghuvaṁśa*, V, pp. 21, 32.

[3]*Raghuvaṁśa*, XVII, pp. 65-66; *Abhijñanasākuntala*, II, p. 850; V, p. 911 (Bengali edition by S.C. Chakravorty).

[4]*Nārada Smṛti*, XVII, p. 48.

[5]*EI*, XX, p. 63; XXI, p. 81.

this, there were various other taxes and royal dues, such as udraṅga, Uparikara, Kalpta, Upaklipta, Hiraṇya, Kara, Bali, and the supply of forced labour (Viṣthi) and dairy produce.[1]

During this period not only the agriculturists but also the artisans had to pay taxes to the State.[2] But we do not know in what way or to what extent they were taxed. Another important fiscal due mentioned in the *Amarakoṣa*[3] is Śulka (tolls and customs). The existence of this is attested by some epigraphic evidences. Some of the inscriptions simply record the fiscal term Śulka.[4] The Bihar stone pillar inscription of Skandagupta[5] mentions the name of a collector (Śaulkika) of Śulka. According to Fleet the Śaulkika is the official title of the superintendent of tolls or customs. The second plate of Dharmāditya[6] mentions Gopālasvamin as a customs officer, who, in the opinion of Pargiter, used to control trade. Probably he also used to levy taxes and collect state dues on merchandise from traders and merchants. In the Faridpur grant of Gopachandra a similar kind of official is referred to.[7] Thus he is the same as the Superintendent of tolls and customs of the *Arthaśāstra.*[8]

Another source of the king's wealth was treasure-trove deposits, the digging of mines and manufacture of salt, all of which exclusively belonged to the state. There are many indirect references to this kind of wealth.[9] In our period a substantial income accrued to the state from fines imposed on thieves and wrong-doers. Nārada and Bṛhaspati give ample evidences regarding this item and in many of our inscriptions fines imposed on criminals are mentioned.[10]

From the above analysis we see that in the Gupta period there were several impositions besides the usual ⅙th customary due.

[1]Maity, *ELGP*—'Land Revenue' section.
[2]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 257. (Gaya Copper-Plate of Samudragupta.)
[3]*Amarkoṣa* 8. 28, p. 181.
[4]Fleet, *CII*, III, pp. 122, 246.
[5]*Ibid* , p. 50.
[6]*IA*, 1910, p. 200.
[7]*Ibid.*, p 204.
[8]*Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭitya, XXI; XXII, p. 121.
[9]*EI*, XV, p. 42; *IHR*, XVII, p. 115; Fleet, *CII*, III, pp. 193, 198, 238, 246 *JASB* (*NS*), XX, p. 53.
[10]Fleet, *CII*, III, pp. 108, 115, 118, 122, 238, 247; *EI*, VII, pp. 287; *JASB* (*NS*) XX, p. 53 etc.

(Of course, it is true that the Bhāga-bhoga, Kara, Hiraṇya, Suvarṇa, Dhānya, etc. do not imply different impositions.) Thus the early Gupta emperors had a very good income from a large variety of sources, accounting for their all-round success in different fields of activity.

Provincial Administration

The empire was divided into a number of provinces. The provinces were called Deśas or Bhuktis and were governed by Uparikas. Sometimes the princes of the royal blood, called Kumārāmātyas, used to govern the provinces. The Uparika may represent the Prādeśikas[1] of the Aśokan epigraphs and is the same as the Amātyas of the Sātavāhana provinces.[2]

For political and economic considerations Saurāshtra was considered as one of the most important provinces in the Gupta empire. That is why a very able man, Parṇadatta, was selected by Skandagupta. Regarding his ability and qualifications, Skandagupta says 'Among all my servants put together who is there who is suitable, endowed with intellect, modest, possessed of a disposition that is destitute of wisdom and money, endowed with truth, straight-forwardness, nobility and prudent behaviour and possessed a sweetness, civility and fame, loyal, affectionate, endowed with many characteristics, possessed of a mind that has been tried and is found to be pure by all the tests of honesty, occupied with the welfare of all mankind, capable both in the lawful acquisition of wealth and also in the preservation of it when acquired, and further in causing the increase of it when protected, and able to dispense with it on worthy objects when it has been increased shall govern all my countries of the *Sāurashtras?* I have it, there is just one man, Parṇadatta, competent to bear this burden...And just as the gods became comfortable and not disturbed in mind when they had appointed Varuṇa to the western point of the compass, so the king felt greatly relieved after appointing Parṇadatta'[3] as the governor of Saurāshtra, who had all the requisite qualifications for this highly responsible post. His functions were thus executive and judicial.

[1]*Arthaśāstra* of Kautilya, pp. 142, 217 (English Translation by R. Shamasastry); Hultzsch, *CII*, I, p. 4.

[2]Nasik Cave Inscription: *EI*, VIII.

[3]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 58.

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

For the betterment of administration the provinces were again divided into districts, called Vishayas. There were quite a large number of Vishayas in the Gupta empire. Each Vishaya was administered by a royal official, known as Vishayapati, and his office was known as the *Adhisṭhāna-Adhikaraṇa*[1] (district head office). He was generally appointed by the governor of the Bhukti. Kumārāmātya Betravarman was appointed by the provincial governor to the Vishaya of Koṭivarsha.[2]

In his district head office *(Adhisṭhāna Adhikaraṇa)*, Betravarman was assisted by a group of representative people, viz. *Nagara-Sreshthi* (chief merchant of the town), *Sārthavaha* (chief caravan trader), *Prathama-Kulika* (chief artisan), and *Prathama-Kāyastha* (chief scribe).[3] In every important administrative business they used to assist the royal official of the district.[4]

VILLAGE ADMINISTRATION

A district had so many villages within it. A village was the unit of administration. The administrative and judicial business of villages were carried on by the *Grāmika.*[5] He was assisted by a group of village elders, such as Kutumbikas, Mahattaras, etc.[6] According to *Arthaśāstra,*[7] the *Grāmika* was not a paid servant of the crown but an elected official of the villagers. The royal servant in the village was the *Grām-Vridha.*[8] But Manu[9] seems to suggest that Grāmika was the king's representative in the villages.

The Gupta king thus controlled the whole machinery of the government and had the largest share in the formulation of policy. He wielded very extensive powers, commanded the army, administered justice, issued receipts and granted remission of

[1] *EI*, XV, p. 530, pls. 5; XXI, p. 18; XX, p. 61. *IHQ*, VI, p. 53 etc.
[2] *EI*, XV, p. 130.
[3] *EI*, XV, p. 130, pls. 5; XX p. 61; XXI, p. 81; *IA*, XXXIX, 1910, p. 195.
[4] Maity, *ELGP* (Land sale), etc.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 95 fn.
[6] *Ibid.*
[7] *Arthaśāstra* of Kautilya, pp. 48, 161, 168, 169, 178; translated by R. Shamasastry; Luders, no. 1327.
[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 175, 248.
[9] *Manu Smṛti*, VII, pp. 115-19.

taxes. But he could not be a despot always, for many of the laws of the land had a sacred character, being derived from the Vedas and Smṛtis, and were to a certain extent independent of the royal control and the Gupta king was probably bound to respect them. Besides these, many of the ordinary secular laws originated from the guilds and corporations and local customs.

The king, however, maintained a hierarchy of administrative set-up through the provincial heads. Provincial governors were directly appointed by the king and were responsible to him in the administrative affairs. Through him the king also influenced the district administration, for the Vishayapatis were again appointed by the Uparikas (governors).

Under ancient conditions the king was supposed to be the military lord of the State. He had to depend largely on the military strength of the state for the preservation and extension of his kingdom. But there may have been some shortcomings of the military administration. Not only that, the whole administrative set-up depends largely on the personality and valour of the king. As long as the great kings like Chandragupta I, Samudragupta, Chandragupta II, Kumāragupta I and Skandagupta were ruling the empire, the people enjoyed peace and prosperity in Gupta India. But after their death the great Gupta empire fell like a house of cards. Forces of disintegration continued right up to the establishment of British power in India. But in contemporary China one dynasty succeeded another, and even in case of the division of the empire and the succession of provinces from the central control, the empire ultimately survived and maintained its existence. On the other hand, in India the empires under the Mauryas, Kushāṇas, Guptas, Pālas, Rāshṭrakūṭas, Cholas and many others vanished altogether within a few centuries of their foundation, although many of the kings of these dynasties were great conquerors and administrators as well.

According to Dr. A. L. Basham,[1] they failed to establish an adequate administrative set-up. However, 'in both India and China civil servants were selected by examination, but the examination system of ancient India was merely the testing of

[1]Basham, A.L., *The Indian Sub-continent in Historical Perspective*, pp. 10-11.

the honesty and loyalty of the servant of the state by means of spies and agents provocateurs. The textbooks on polity regularly advised that all bureaucrats should be continually watched by spies. In such circumstances an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust must have prevailed throughout the civil service of the ancient Indian kingdom and led to inefficiency and lack of initiative.' It would thus 'seem that the Indian bureaucrats, even under the Mauryas', Guptas and many others, 'never achieved the comparatively high standards of efficiency and probity reached by the Chinese mandarin, trained in the political ethics of Confucius.'[1]

Moreover, regarding the structural development of administrative set up of the Guptas, R. S. Sharma rightly remarks, "The contract between the Maurya and the Gupta system of administration is evident. In spite of divine elements being attributed to him the Gupta king was not so powerful as his Mauryan counterpart. His army, bureaucracy and taxation machinery were not as elaborate as the Mauryas. Officials tended to be hereditary and stronger through occasional grants of land revenues. The Gupta rulers in both rural and urban areas initiated the first systematic provincial and local administration, with which landed, military and professional interests were associated. The period marked the sudden elevation of the village administration to a high position of authority. This was a necessary concomitant of the reduction of the bureaucratic staff. Local elements also play an important part in the administration of law and justice which seem to have been far more organised in this than in an earlier period.[2]

[1]Basham, A.L., *Loc. cit.*

[2]Sharma R.S., *Political Ideas and Institution in Ancient India*, pp. 261-62.

CHAPTER V

SOCIAL LIFE

Regarding early Indian society and culture Dr. L. D. Barnett remarks, "In India there is no twilight before the dawn. In the darkness the eastern sky suddenly flushes, and the ruddy edge of the morning sun swiftly leaps upon the horizon. And it is so with the history of the great people which had led the van of Indian culture. They have left no record of slow and painful struggle onwards through lessening darkness of barbarism towards the light of civilization. The earliest thing that we know of them is their Ṛgveda and the culture to which the Ṛgveda bears testimony. And the culture is already strong, rich in potentiality, typically Indian."[1] His student and eminent historian, Dr. A.L. Basham, explaining the very essence of Indian society and culture writes: "The ancient civilization of India differs from those of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Greece, in that its traditions have been preserved without a break down to the present day. Until the advent of the archaeologist, the peasant of Egypt or Iraq had no knowledge of the culture of their forefathers, and it is doubtful whether his Greek counterpart had any but the vaguest ideas about the glory of Periclean Athens. In each case these had been an almost complete break with the past. On the other hand, the earliest Europeans to visit India found a culture fully conscious of its own antiquity—a culture which indeed exaggerated that antiquity, and claimed not to have fundamentally charged for many thousands of years. To this day legends known to the humblest Indian recall the names of shadowy chieftains who lived nearly a thousand years before Christ, and the orthodox Brāhmaṇa in his daily worship

[1]*Antiquities of India*, p. 1.

repeats hymns composed even earlier. India and China have in fact, the oldest continuous cultural traditions of the world."[1] Indian social principles and social ethics are also continuous from the very inception of civilization; and from the above standpoint we have to study the different patterns and behaviour of the early Hindu society and the relationship between a man and his environment. The very essence of the Hindu society is well brought out by Prof. S. Radhakrishnan: "The social life is a movement in our destiny, not the terminus. Its state is always one of tension and movement. There is a perpetual endeavour to raise as high as possible the general level of existence in relation to the given conditions. The *Hindu dharma* gives us a programme of the rules and regulations and permits their constant change. The rules of *dharma* are the moral flash of immortal ideas, and so are mutable."[2] Thus, the early Indian in his social environment is quite different from his European counterpart and proper care should be taken to study his social life.

Early Indians are much more concerned with social life than with government and politics. It is, thus, useful for us to study their social history; and a society is a system of relationship among different individuals living in a particular place. In the opinion of Prof. A. Toynbee,[3] "It is the total network of relations between human beings"; and that "is fostered between man and man through their mere talks and associations," says Kālidāsa.[4] This gives rise to society which includes persons who are either elders, juniors or equals; and the relationship develops through marriages and other social habits. Among the different forms of habits the obedience of a junior to his superior is a very important factor. He generally bows his head or touches the feet of his elders, like mother, father, preceptors and others.[5]

[1] *The Wonder that was India*, p. 4.

[2] *Religion and Society*, p. 50.

[3] *The Study of History*, XII, p. 271.

[4] *Raghuvaṁśa*, II, 58—'Sambandhambhasanapurvamahuh'.

[5] *Raghuvaṁśa*, VI, 25 (Praṇāmakriyā), XIV, 13, 60, XX. 14; *Kumārasambhava*, III, 62 (Praṇama); *Raghuvaṁśa*, XIII, 72, 77, XIV, 5, 71 (Vande); *Malavikagnimitra*, p. 97 (namaste); *Raghuvaṁśa*, VIII, 12, XI. 89, XIII, 70, XIV, 2, 60; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, p. 145; *Raghuvaṁśa*, I, 57, XI, 7; *Kumārasambhava*, VIII, 27; *Raghuvaṁśa*, XI, 4, 5.

They in return bless him with good luck.[1] There are many forms of such blessings. An ascetic would bless a king with the words, "May you be blessed with a son of universal sovereignty"[2] and the king at once feels very much obliged.[3] Similarly, elderly ladies wish the young girls for good behaviour and "undivided love" from their husbands.[4] Sitā raises Laksmaṇa from her feet and sends him to assist Rāma with this blessing, "I am pleased with you; may you live long."[5] It is also the common practice that the elders use to bless the youngsters with the words "may your path be free from dangers", before their departure.[6] When friends or brothers meet together, they generally embrace or shake their hands,[7] and from the very distance they also express their good wishes.[8] Again, while talking to an elderly person, one slightly bends forward and expresses polite manners through soft words;[9] similarly he expresses his wants and desires before his superiors with folded hands.[10]

By the above process the social bonds and ties are very intimately developed among different people living in the same family and society. And the aim of social organisation is to ensure the best possible relationship among them; and it finds corroboration with the Hindu *Śāstras* which uphold self-realisation and finally the emancipation *(Moksha)* of the human soul and the general welfare of the society as a whole. All are well manifested through our family life and our life outside our family environment in villages and cities.

Family

Family is the first unit of social life; and it generally includes father, mother, their children and some other near relations. Family ties develop from marriage and a tender bond of family

1—'āssisam'—*Raghuvaṁśa,* XI, 6, 31; *Kumārasambhava,* VI. 90; *Vikramorvaśiyam,* p. 137 (Ayusman).

2'*Chakravartinam Putramapnuhi*'—*Abhijñānaśākuntala,* p. 21.

3'*Pratigṛhitam*'—*Ibid.*

4*Kumārasambhava,* III, 63; *Abhijñānaśākuntala,* p. 21.

5'Pritasmi te Saumya Ciraya Jiva'—*Raghuvaṁśa,* XIV, 59.

6'Sivaste Panthanah santu'—*Abhijñānaśākuntala,* p. 148.

7*Raghuvaṁśa,* XIII, 73; *Vikramorvaśīyam,* p. 21.

8*Mālavikāgnimitra,* p. 68 (Yoga Ksemam).

9*Raghuvaṁśa,* V, 32.

10*Raghuvaṁśa,* II, 64.

affection grows as a natural corollary. The birth of a male child is always welcomed in the family, for he can discharge various funeral obligations and inherit his father's property. Next to son, a daughter is welcomed by the parents. She is however, considered to belong to a different family,[1] where she will go as a wife and "her parting will make her parents cry."[2] Filial bonds between parents and children are vividly expressed in contemporary literature. When the little child crawls about on the floor, then stands up and walks with the help of mother or nurse,[3] it is a scene for the eyes of the parents. When it stammers out its first words and sits restlessly on the lap of its parents, what a real joy is stored for them.[4] This is why, parting with a son is very much painful and brings tears to the eyes of many a royal father.[5] The death of a son in the life time of his parents is almost a mortal blow.[6] Among other members of a family we read of brothers and sisters living happily together; daughter-in-law is loved by father and mother-in-laws; and a very close and affectionate tie develops between all the members of a family. Of course, the children of the kings and nobles are often placed in the care of nurses who suckle and feed them and train them to walk and speak.[7]

It is purely a man dominated society; and the relationship between a man and his wife is not always very healthy. Both monogamous and polygamous marriage practices are common in society; the richer section prefers the latter system which often causes family discord. It is one of the causes of civil strife among the sons of a dead king. It is, however, expected that a closer family bond between husband and wife, parent and child is somewhat slackened as a result of polygamy. The Dharmaśāstras as well as the epigraphs of our period show that a son succeeds his father. It is clearly stated in numerous inscriptions of our period. Thus, the social framework was patriarchal and next to grand-father, father became the head of the family. The newly wedded girl was admitted into the family of her husband and had to accept the surname and the *gotra* of her lord.

[1] *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, IV, 21.
[2] Full of references,—*Abhijñānaśākuntala*, IV: *Kumārasambhava*, VI, 92.
[3] *Raghuvaṁśa* III, 25.
[4] *Ibid.*, 25, 26.
[5] *Ibid.*, XI, 4.
[6] *Ibid.*, IX, 78.
[7] *Ibid.*, III, 25.

But the matriarchal system apparently existed side by side in India, especially among some tribal people.

The desire of offspring is a common human psychology especially among the womenfolk. It is, thus, rightly observed by Sir J.G. Frazer that "to live and to cause to live, to eat food and to beget children, these were the primary wants of man in the past, and they will be the primary wants of man in the future so long as the world lasts."[1] Even today in India barrenness is regarded as the greatest possible curse to a woman; and to a pious Hindu it is believed that there is little scope to find a room in the Abode of Bliss after death, if he has not left a male child. In the Hindu scriptures, too, it is emphatically pointed out that the object of marriage is to beget children.[2] In Bengal barren women and even sometimes men, perform many religious rites and ceremonies for the birth of a child. Many deities are worshipped for their powers over human fertility. They are Kārttikeya,[3] Shashṭhi,[4] Śiva,[5] along with them Dharma Thākur, Manasā, Kāli, Mangala Chaṇḍi, Vargabhimā are also worshipped to-day.[6] Moreover, the worship of the father god, Śiva and mother goddess, Kāli as the fertility deity seem to have been originated before the coming of the Āryans to India. In later years Śiva was worshipped in this capacity by the *liṅga* symbol. Even to-day barren ladies from different parts of India pay a visit to the famous Liṅga-Rāaj-temple of Bhubaneswar in Orissa to offer prayers for bearing children. Similarly, Shashṭhī, whose origin may be traced back to the early period, is thought of as the protecting goddess of offspring.[7] On the basis of the discovery of a few small female figures of a goddess in the Indus Valley areas, E. Mackay remarks that the goddess was possibly worshipped as the guardian deity

[1] *The Golden Bough*, pt. IV (Adonis I), p. 5.

[2] 'Putrarthe-kriyate-Bharya'.

[3] Chakravarti, C., *Banglar Pujaparvan*, pp. 37-38; Tagore, A.N., *Banglar Vrata*, p. 16.

[4] *Ibid*, p. 38; Tagore, *Banglar Vrata*, p. 16; Ray, N.R., *Bangalir Itihas (Adi Parva)*, p. 591; Bhattacharyya, *Bangla Mangal Kavyer Itihas*, p. 711; Roy, A.N., ed., *Bangali Puja Parvan*, pp. 5-61.

[5] Bhattacharya, *op. cit*, p. 568; Bardhan, M., *Banglar Loka-nritya-O-Gitivaichitra*, p. 29.

[6] Bhattacharya, *op. cit*, pp. 523-25, 540-41.

[7] Ray, *op. cit*, p. 591: Bhattacharya, *op. cit*, 707; *Man in India*, XXVIII, 1948, pp. 152-62.

of the house as well as the protecting deity of the new-born babies.[1]

Thus, for religious, and quite possibly for economic reasons, birth of a son is always preferable to that of a daughter. The later however, enjoys a second position in family unit.[2] Son is the source of great joy and pleasure[3] and he is regarded as the seed,[4] the sprout[5] and the prop of a family.[6] Thus, great merriment accompanies the birth of a son.[7] However, a daughter is also treated as the very life of the family.[8]

The family life, as we have already discussed, is not always pleasing and an un-mixed blessing. Some age old evil practices hamper joy and happiness of the family life. Drinking of wine, as a means of recreation, is very commonly stated in our literature and especially in the *Kāmasutra* of Vātsyāyana. Too much drinking in some cases are the sources of displeasure and discord even in the upper strata of the society.[9] Sometimes, the poor people[10] are addicted to it which often ruin the family life. It is also interesting to note that rich ladies are sometimes addicted to drinking.[11] The Dharmapada Commentary states that once a year drinking festival continues for seven days at Śrāvastī and gentlemen and ladies freely drink wine; and some of the fair-sex are so much intoxicated that they are beaten by their lords[12], and it can, thus, be taken as a source of family discord. Moreover, polygamous marriage system, which are very common among the rich people, is a great source of family discord.[13] As stated in the Dharmapada Commentary, the two co-wives very seriously quarrel with each other. One of them is a barren lady, who thinks, "if my rival gives birth to a son or a daughter, she alone

[1] *The Indus Civilization*, p. 67.
[2] *Kumārasambhava*, VI, 63.
[3] *Raghuvaṁśa*, III, 26, 33.
[4] *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, VII, 15.
[5] *Ibid.*, 19.
[6] *Vikramorvaśiyam*, V, 15.
[7] *Raghuvaṁśa*, X, 76.
[8] *Kumārasambhava*, VI, 63.
[9] *Raghuvaṁśa*, XIX, 12.
[10] *Ibid.*, II.
[11] Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 81; *Raghuvaṁśa* VII.
[12] *Dasakumāracarita*, II, i, 29, 329,
[13] *Vikramorvaśiyam*.

will be the mistress of the household. I must see to it that she shall not give birth to a child."[1] Ultimately, she became so much jealous and cruel that she kills her rival and her son.[2] Over and above, there are numerous references to courtesans,[3] prostitutes,[4] adulterous and sex-perverted ladies[5] in the literature of our period; and their social existence certainly hampered the cordial relationship between husband and wife. Even, their very existence tended to hamper the mental growth of the younger generations in society.

In the Classical age, we have not come across many references to the joint-family system. The early *smṛtis* like Yājñavalkya, is, however, in praise of this system. If any body can do house-hold performances peacefully with father, mother, wife, brothers, sons and daughters, sisters, maternal uncle, wife's relations, the old, diseased, guests, teachers, friends, servants, priests, physicians and others, he will conquer all the regions *(Lokas)* in heaven.[6]

Stages (Āśramas) of Life

According to the Hindu concept, the highest aim of life is to attain the final liberation *(Moksha)*. The Śāstrakāras (Law-givers and others) divide the life time of man into four stages *(Āśramas)*.[7] The *Āśrama* is derived from the word *Śrama* which refers to hard work and each *Āśrama* is a preparation for the next one. Thus, the four stages of life are *Brahmacharya*, (Pupil's life), *Gārhastha* (life of a householder), *Vānaprastha* (forest-dweller) and *Sannyāsa* (recluse).

Even in the age of the Paurāṇic influence, different ceremonies and sacrifices *(Yajñas)* failed to help a man to attain the highest liberation and thereby avoid the cycle of birth and death. The *Vāyu Purāṇa*, on the other hand, recommends that a man can

1 *Dasakumāracaritā*, II, i, 29, 329.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ṛtusaṁhāra*, II, 5.

4 *Kāmandakiya Nītisāra*, III. 3, 20-21.

5 *Raghuvaṁśa*, XVI, 12; XVII, 69; XIX, 31; *Kumārasambhava*, VI, 43; *Ṛtusaṁhāra*, II, 10.

6 *Ibid.*, 157-158.

7 *Raghuvaṁśa*, I. 8, V, 19, VIII, 14, XIV, 67; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*.

enjoy liberation *(Moksha)* only by the rightful performance of duties in different stages of life.[1] *Manu Saṁhitā* has its definite influence on society even in the Classical age. In the opinion of Manu, a man in his boyhood is indebted to the sages, forefathers and gods and it is his duty to be free from all these debts,[2] otherwise he cannot attain final liberation. Manu further advises the people to enter the fourth stage *(Āśrama)* of life, when the three other obligations, such as, *Ṛishiriṇa* in the *Brahmacharya-āśrama*, *Pitṛiriṇa* in the *Gārhasthāśrama*, and *Devaṛiṇa* in the *Vānaprastha-āśrama* are performed properly.[3] If any body violates the above code of conduct, he would go to hell.[4] The first stage *(Āśrama)* of life prepares the ground for the second, the second for the third and the third for the last. Thus, the liberation of our soul from an earthly existence is the basis of the above stages of life. Poet Kālidāsa partly believes the above practices, when he states that a *Brahmachārī*, belonging to the Brāhmin family, should study Vedas, Purāṇas, etc.[5] A Kṣhatriya boy should study Vedas and others along with archery.[6] After this stage of life, a *Brahmachārī* (Pupil) is allowed to marry and is settled down in life as a house-holder[7] and Kālidāsa lays special importance to the life of a householder.[8] Thus, the Hindus studying the various *Vidyās* (subjects) in the stage of a *Brahmachārī* (pupil), leading the life of comfort as a house-holder, practising asceticism in the old age and their life in the last stage by means of Yoga and, thus, complete the allotted span of their human existence.[9] Raghu in his old age has abdicated the throne in favour of his son; puts on bark clothes and then retires to the forest and this is the age old practice of the kings of the solar-race.[10]

[1] *Ibid*, 11.14.4.
[2] *Manusmṛti*, IV, 257.
[3] *Manusmṛti*, VI, 36.
[4] *Ibid.*, VI. 35.
[5] *Raghuvaṁśa*, V. 1, 20, 21.
[6] *Raghuvaṁśa*, III. 30; *Vikramorvaśiyam*, p. 128.
[7] *Raghuvaṁśa*, V. 10.
[8] *Ibid.*
[9] *Raghuvāṁśa*, I. 8.
[10] *Raghuvaṁśa*, VII. 71; VIII. 11, 14.

Brahmacharya

The period of *Brahmacharya-āśrama* begins with the initiation ceremony and it ends with the convocation and home-coming ceremony. Before that one is expected to complete his *Upanayana* (sacred-thread) ceremony and after that ceremony the father takes his son to the house of his *Āchārya* (preceptor).[2] Our law-givers suggest the age limit of the boy from five to eleven years.[1] This is the period, when a student has to prepare himself for his future life at home and abroad. In the house of his preceptor, he is expected to acquire proper education and through education he can very easily build up his character, habit, discipline and proper religious outlook. There he has to stay, to read and to work with some other fellow-students and that also helps a great deal to develop a common social outlook.

The life of a *Brahmacharī* (pupil) should be very simple and he is supposed to maintain himself by begging alms from others.[3] His food habits are rather simple and restricted.[4] Before taking his meal he has to take formal sanction from his preceptor. He should not take meat, honey, liquor, stale-sweet, artificial salt, etc. and his dress is as simple as his food. A Brāhmin pupil is expected to put on a piece of hempen cloth, a Kshatriya a silken cloth and a Vaiśya a woollen cloth. Their upper garments are made of the skins of antelope, *ruru* and goat respectively;[5] apparently there are special dresses used by them in different ceremonial occasions. Besides, they use *Upavita* (sacred-thread), *Mekhalā* (Scrap), and *Daṇḍa* (rod);[6] pupils belonging to the upper caste are expected to use *Yajñopavitas* (sacred-thread,—special).[7] They must not indulge in luxurious habits by using eye-ointment, scent, umbrella, shoes, etc.[8] and should avoid dancing, music, playing on instruments, gambling, useless gossipping and unnecssary talk with women.[9]

[1]Kane, *HDS*, II, pt. I, p. 269.
[2]*Ibid.*, I, pp. 14, 15, 17, 27; II, 36.
[3]*Yājnavalkyasmṛti*, I, p. 29, 30; *Viṣṇusmṛti*, XXVIII, 9.
[4]*Viṣṇusmṛti*, XXVIII. 10; *Manusmṛti*, II. 57.
[5]*Manusmṛti*, II. 41.
[6]*Viṣṇusmṛti*, XXVIII. 8.
[7]*Raghuvaṁśa*, XI. 64.
[8]*Manusmṛti*, II. 174; *Yājnavalkyasmṛti*, I. 32; *Viṣṇusmṛti*, XXVIII. 11.
[9]*Manusmṛti*, II, 177-9; *Yājnavalkyasmṛti*, I. 32.

Moreover, they should speak the truth, modest, self-controlled, free from lust *(kāma)*, anger *(krodha)* and greed *(lobha)*.[1]

During their stay in their preceptor's house, they are expected to study the Vedas, Purāṇas, the Epics, grammar, logic and other subjects. The relation between the teachers and the taught is very cordial. The teacher is called the *Āchāryya* (preceptor) and also the spiritual father of the pupil and the wife of the teacher is the spiritual mother[2] and this relationship serves an unique purpose of his education; he feels quite homely with them; and sage-like personality of the preceptor also helps to build up the character and personality of his pupil.

Gārhasthāśrama

After completing his student career, one is expected to marry and settle down in life;[3] and by discharging his duties as a house-holder, he is expected to keep balance among the basic concepts of the Hindu view of life, such as, *Dharma, Artha, Kāma* and *Mokṣha*. He has to perform many ceremonies *(Saṁskāras)*[4] like *Vivāha, Garbhādhāna,*[5] *Puṁsavana,*[6] *Jāta-karma,*[7] *Nāmakaraṇa,*[8] *Annaprāśana, Upanayana, Śrāddha-kriyā,* etc.

Vānaprasthāśrama

In the third stage of life a man leaves his hearth and home and has to take shelter in a forest and tries to bring under control his passions, sentiments and all his sensuous pleasures.[9] His wife may stay at home looking after their family affairs or she may accompany her husband into the forest,[10] if she feels the same sort of sentiment and wants to serve her lord in wilderness.

[1] *Manusmṛti*, II. 177-9.
[2] *Viṣṇusmṛti*, XXVIII. 38.
[3] *Kāmandakiya Nītisāra*, I. 4. 1.
[4] *Yājnavalkyasmṛti*, I, 11-12.
[5] *Ibid.*, I, 79.
[6] *Ibid.*, I, 11.
[7] *Mārkandeya Purāṇa*, 1128, 24-25.
[8] *Manusmṛti*, II. 30-32.
[9] *Manusmṛti*, VI. 4; *Yajñavalkyasmṛti*, III. 45.
[10] In the case of Raghuvaṁśa and his wife, *Raghuvaṁśa*, VII. 71.

But the life in the forest is very hard for them. Throughout the day he has to perform several rites and has to worship fire-god, other gods and goddesses, forefathers and others. He may beg alms from door to door and can also gather corn from wilderness. He used to take meal once at night and cannot cut his nails, hair and beard. He must be very friendly towards his guests and friends. Such a rigorous system cannot encourage many people to accept this life.

Sannyās-āśrama

It is a final stage of life where one should acquire steadiness, self-control, forgiveness, free from greed, purity, self-control, correct discernment, free from anger, knowledge and truthfulness[1] and by these practices he can attain the highest liberation *(Moksha)*.[2] He can beg his food from door to door and his begging bowl must be made of wood and he would put on only a piece of cloth *(Kaupīna)*.

A.B. Keith rightly observes, "the scheme of four stages is in many ways perfectly adopted to Indian life, for it starves no side of a man's life."[3] Over and above, the above scheme of life serves many important social purposes. Every house-holder is in a sense a key-man in society; women, children, aged, old and infirm all depend on him. The above Hindu view of life is placed before us by our law-givers, poets and others. Now, it is very difficult for us to believe how far all the twice-born *(Dvijas)* and others (non-*Dvijas)* follow this system very closely. Regarding the four stages of life Vātsyāyana is rather liberal in his outlook; in his opinion one should acquire knowledge in childhood; satisfy his natural desire for enjoyment and pleasure in youth, religious practices *(Dharma)* and liberation *(Moksha)* in his old age.[4]

Position of Women

The Brāhmanical concept of women as found in the Smṛtis of Manu, Yājñavalkya, Nārada, Bṛhaspati and others is not very fair even in the Classical age. They are entirely dependent

[1] *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, III. 66.
[2] *Manusmṛti*, VI. 60.
[3] *History of Sanskrit Lirerature*, p. 89.
[4] *Kāmandakiya Nītisāra*, I. 11; II, 2, 3.

on their male counter-part. Only the son can pay off the debts of his father, and offers rice-balls *(Piṇḍa)* to his departed father and fore-fathers; he can also maintain his family cycle by marriages. For all these affairs a daughter is totally mis-fit. Moreover, the father has to spend a lot of money for her marriage; and for social and other reasons if she is unfit for marriage, the father has to maintain her throughout her life.

But we have a little different picture in the writings of Kālidāsa; according to him a daughter is the very life of the family[1] and she is honoured and respected in society. Our *Smṛti* writers recommend punishment for our mis-behaviour towards our female counterpart.[2] Regarding their intellectual attainment, at least girls of the high families received regular education in different subjects. Even the hermit girls like Śakuntalā, Priyaṁvadā, Anusūya and others exhibit a fair acquaintance of history *(Itihāsa)*, *Purāṇa*, literature and are in the habit of composing letters.[3] In the opinion of Vātsyāyana, they must have fair knowledge in sixty-four arts which include riddles of words, chanting recitations from books, completing unfinished verses, knowledge of lexicons and metres, and so forth.[4] A good house wife is expected to frame her family budget and regulate her expenditure accordingly.[5] The princes and others know singing, dancing, instrumental music, acting, and painting.[6] The *Amarakoṣa* also refers to female teachers *(upadhyāya* and *upadhyāyī)* and female instructors of Vedic songs and *mantras (āchārya)*.[7]

Marriage

In presenting a short account of the Hindu marriage system in the Classical age the chief sources of an enquiry are the Law-books *(Dharmaśāstras)* and literature. There is no denying the fact that the *Śāstras* prescribe the norm, but society does not

1 *Kumārasambhava*, VI, 63.

2 *Manusmṛti*, VIII. 22; 3685; *Nāradasmṛti*, XII. 34. 71-72; *Yājñavalkya-Smṛti*, I. 66.

3 *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, I.

4 *Kāmandakiya Nītisāra*, I. 3, 12.

5 *Ibid.*, I. 3, 12; I, VI. 32.

6 *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, I, IV......; *Meghadūta*, I. 23; *Malāvikagnimitra*, II.

7 11.6.14.

always move in ideal line. In ancient India there was definitely a large diffusion of diverse cultures.[1] Even in the society guided by purely Aryan laws, there might have developed, in course of time, territorial or local conventions demanding the sanction of the *Śāstras*. Our Law-givers *(Śāstrakāras)* are always conscious of these difficulties and they are intelligent enough to harmonize the conventional or customary laws with their own.[2] Speaking about different customs Āpastamba rightly remarks that women are the sources of customs specially related to marriage.[3]

The sociologist's study of marriage in general is quite interesting. "The marriage-institution, with swarm of mores and taboos by which it is buttressed, is a most astonishing result of the reaction of man on his life-experience and of the institutional effects which can be produced by the inconsistent struggle of mankind to adjust life arrangements to life-condition under the text of social expediency."[4] In the opinion of Westermarck, "marriage is an alliance (association), approved and privileged by the judicial system, of persons of different sex, either to run a joint household or to have intercourse or to have intercourse exclusively."[5]

He further explains marriage as "nothing else than a more or less durable connection between the male and the female, lasting beyond the mere act of propagation till after the birth of offspring."[6] But this definition cannot fully illustrate the ethical spiritual aspect of the Hindu marriage. Here, all our important social activities are jumbled up together with our religious system. L.A.A. Ayer rightly remarks, "marriage may be subsumed under its ethical aspect as a physio-spiritual communion between man and woman for the purpose of procreation."[7] Here, marriage is the only sacrament through which one is

[1]Derrett, J.D.M., *Religion, Law and the State in India*, p. 404.

[2]*Manusmṛti*, I. 17; II, 6, 12; VII. 203; VIII. 41, 46; *Gautama Dharmasutra*, XI. 20; *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, I. 343; II. 192; *Arthaśāstra of Kautilya*, III. 7; *Nāradasmṛti*, I. 10.

[3]*Āpastamba Dharmasūtra*, II. 11, 29, 25; Kane, *HDS*, III, p. 857; Derrett, *Religion, Law and the State in India*, pp. 148-70.

[4]*The Science of Society*, III, 1528.

[5]Quoted by Rechtswiss, X. 225, Dr. Friedrichs; vide, *Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*, II, 364.

[6]*History of Human Marriage*, pp. 19-20.

[7]*Lectures on Ethnography*, p. 97.

baptised to the solemn status of a house-holder, where one is called upon to discharge the high and onerous duties in company with his wife, who is given the appellations of *Sahadharmiṇi* and *Dharmapatni*. Thus, from our traditional standpoint A.C. Das observes, "it is the most solemn affair in the man's or woman's life, upon which depend his or her worldly and spiritual welfare and final emancipation from bonds that tie him or her down to the earth. It is certainly not a thing to be donned or doffed at one's pleasure. It is an eternal bond that binds two souls together for ever and each suffers for other's lapses and derelictions. It is not a contract with them, but a sacrament and there is no breaking away or parting from the union."[1]

However, the ancient marriage system is one of the most important socio-religious practices *(Saṁskāras)* among the Hindus. Among the four stages *(Āśramas)* of life Gautama[2] and Baudhāyana[3] place householder's life *(Gārhastha)* on the top; here he can very effectively discharge his duties alongwith his wife.

Before reaching her puberty a girl should be given in marriage to a suitable bridegroom by her parents;[4] but Vātsyāyana recommends marriage after it[5], for she must be aged enough to have proper education. She should be younger in age than her husband,[6] and the practice of adult marriages are also seen from our literature, for Śakuntalā and Mālavikā are sufficiently aged at the time of their marriages.[7] Thus, the adult marriages are not out of date; as the early Indians were very loyal to the Brāhmanical tradition, they preferred child marriages in their society and that tradition continued in Indian villages even upto the nineteenth century.

Environment, nature, topography, geography, and climate determine social behaviour and social patterns of mankind,[8] and

[1] *Ṛgvedic Culture*, p. 385; vide also *RV*, 10. 42; *Atharvaveda*, 14.1.22; *Arthaśastra of Kautilya*, III. 3, 19; *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra*, II. 6 13.16.

[2] *Gautama Dharmasūtra*, I, III. 3.

[3] *Baudhāya ıa Dharmasūtra*, II. 6.29.

[4] *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, I. 64.

[5] *Kāmandakiya Nītisāra*, II. 1 12.

[6] *Ibid*, I. 3.12.

[7] *Ibid*

[8] Dunning, W.A., *History of Political Thought*, p. 419.

they differ from continent to continent. The tropical climate like India helps to *originate* sex-consciousness among her people earlier than their counterpart in Europe. Our early social thinkers, thus, recommend marriage at an early age; and the eight forms of marriages prevalent among the early Indians may be taken as a natural corollary to the climatic and topographic influence, for, some forms of marriages were regular and others are not and our social thinkers were forced to accept them in spite of their will; and legal and social status were given to women who suffered from irregular system of marriages. Thus, the early Indian life presents almost every possible form of conjugal relation; from the grossest polyandry verging on promiscuity, to the present and the most rational form of monogamy. In the opinion of some socio-religious thinkers the Hindu marriage was one, but the forms through which the brides were procured for marriage had been classified under eight different forms.[1] But H. Mayne thinks, "these eight methods of obtaining wife really resolve themselves into three forms of marriage, namely, the gift of the bride, the sale of the bride and the agreement between the man and woman. In all cases alike, the gift, sale or agreement had to be completed by marriage rites."[2] Ancient law givers classify the eight forms as: *Rākṣasa, Paiśācha, Āsura, Daiva, Brahma, Ārśa, Prājāpatya* and *Gāndharva*.[3]

Rākṣasa

According to the *Rākṣasa* form of marriage a bride is procured by forcible abduction from her house by killing and molesting her guardians, while she cries and weeps.[4] But it is very primitive in its nature and origin, for fighting for the possession of women strictly for individual utilisation is a

[1]Sarkar, *Hindu Law*, p. 97.

[2]*Treaty on Hindu Law and Usage*, p. 123.

[3]*Manusmṛti*, III.21; *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, I.58-61; *Gautama Dharmasūtra*, I.IV.4-11; *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra*, I.11 1-9; *Arthaśāstra of Kautilya*, III.2, 2-9. *Nāradasmṛti*, XII.38-39; *Viṣṇusmṛti*, XXIV. 18; *Mahābhārata*, Adiparva, 67.8-9; *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra*, 2, 5, 11, 17-20; 2.3.12, 1-2.

[4]*Manusmṛti*, III. 33; *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra*, I.11.20, 8; *Nāradasmṛti* XII 43; *Arthaśāstra of Kautilya*, III. 2.8, *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, 4.6; *Viṣṇusmṛti*, XXIV. 25.

common feature among the primitive men.[1] There are many references to the *Rakṣasa* form of marriage in our literature. By the encouragement of Kṛshṇa, Arjuna abducts his sister Subhadrā and marries her.[2] It is also popular among the warrior class and is known to them as a *Kṣhatra* form of marriage. Lord Kṛshṇa kidnapped Rukmiṇī and after the due observance of formalities married her.[3] Vātsyāyana in his *Kāmasūtra* also supports this idea.[4] But "the *Smṛtis* out of regard for the future welfare of the girl concerned preferred to blink at the wrong done but insisted upon the abductor or stealthy seducer performing the rites of *Homa* and *Saptapadī* in order to confer on the girl wronged the status of legally married wife."[5] There is, thus, enough scope for inter-caste marriages, and Manu also suggests certain minor variations in this type of marriage rituals.[6] In the latter period, Indrarāja-I married the daughter of the Chālukya king at Kaira by the *Rakṣasa* form of marriage.[7]

Paiśācha

The *Paiśācha*[8] form of marriage is named after the *Piśāchas* or demons who roam about, stealthily at night and perform many heinous crimes under the cover of darkness. By this form of marriage a maiden is taken away by fraud or by some foul means. Thus, the characteristic feature of chivalry and valour in the *Rākṣasa* form is altogether absent here. When a maiden is in slumber or intoxicated or not in senses, she is stolen away by the would-be bridegroom.[9] In the opinion of the commentator,

[1] *Principles of Sociology*, I, pp. 361-62.

[2] *Mahābhārata*, Ādiparva, 96.11; 219-22.

[3] *Viṣṇupuraṇa*, V.XXVI, 6, 11.; also *Mahābhārata*, Sabhaparva; 38-21.

[4] III, 5 (p. 231).

[5] Kane, *HDS*, II, pt. I, p. 520.

[6] *Manusmṛti*, III.43-44.

[7] Sanjan Plates of Amoghavarsa (dated *c*. 793 Saka) *EI*, XVIII, p. 243; also *Prithvirāja Saṃjukta episode*, *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, II, p. 314, Rana Kumbha carried away the daughter of Jhalwar: Tod, James, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, p. 338.

[8] For detail study, vide, Sternbach, L., *Juridical Studies in Ancient Indian Law*, I.

[9] *Manusmṛti*; III. 25, 34; VIII. 4-7; *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, I.61; *Baudhāyana Dharma Sūtra*, I.11, 20, 9. & *Gautama Dharmaśutra*, I. 4.10; *Viṣnusmṛti*, XII, 43; XXIV, 26; *Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya*, III, 2; *Apastamba Dharma*

Kullukabhatta, it consists in clandestine sex-union with a young girl against her will, when she is in sleep or intoxicated and not in a position to defend her chastity.[1] B.S. Altekar has, however, given some justification of this marriage. "The objection is based on the ignorance of the simple fact that our *Smṛtis* preserve the relics of several pre-historic customs. They have included the *Paiśācha* marriage in this list, firstly, because old tradition knew it and secondly, because it was sometimes resorted to by backward tribes. They wanted to stamp out this practice and have, therefore, mentioned it only for the purpose of its strong condemnation. There was a further reason for its legal recognition. From about the beginning of the Christian era society began to insist upon absolute virginity in the case of brides. Virgins, who had the misfortune of being criminally assaulted, had, therefore, hardly any chance of an honourable marriage with any other person. The only way in which law-writers could help them was by compelling the culprits to marry the parties they have wronged. This obviously is not a satisfactory arrangement, but no other alternative was available. A regard for the future prospects of the unfortunate victims was, thus, a further reason for the mention of the *Paiśācha* marriage. Much against their wishes, *Smṛti* writers were compelled to recognise it. It may, however, be added that two of the early Dharmaśāstra-writers, Vaśiṣṭha and Āpastamba do not recognise *Paiśācha* marriage at all. They mentioned only three unapproved forms, *Gāndharva*, *Rākṣasa* and *Āsura*. They seem to have subscribed to the modern view that a culprit should not be allowed to be benefitted by his wrong.[2]

Āsura

The system of procuring a wife through payment of bride-price may be traced from the history of the different nations of the world. In our Vedic literature we have many such references;[3] just to please the father of the bride one undesirable

Sūtra 11, 10, 26, 21; *Bṛhaspatismṛti.* XXIV, 3; 4; 13-14, *Nāradasmṛti*, XII. 34.

[1]Commentary on *Manusmṛti*, III. 34.

[2]Altekar, *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization*, pp. 36-37.

[3]*ṚV* 1.109,2; *AV*, 14.I.32; *Maitrayaniya Saṁhitā* I.10, 11.; *Parāskara-Gṛhyasūtra*, 1.8.14-18.

suitor has to pay large amount of money to him.[1] As described in the *Mahābhārata*, beautiful Mādrī is purchased for marriage with Pāṇḍu.[2] Kālidāsa also refers to *'duhitṛśulka'* which is explained by Mallinātha as bride-money demanded by her father at the time of her marriage.[3]

Ārsha

According to the *Ārsha* form of marriage, the father of the bride accepts a cow from his would-be son-in-law.[4] Another Sanskrit text records that a pair of cows and two pieces of cloth may be given to the father of the bride by her suitor in the time of their marriage.[5] This form of marriage is also duly recognised by Vātsyāyana in his *Kāmasūtra*.[6] In course of discussing the Maurya social life R.K. Mookerjee points out 'The *Ārsha* was a common form of marriage at that time.'[7] Megasthenes had also remarked "the Indian marriage was marked by a gift of a yoke of oxen.'[8]

Brāhma

According to the principle of the Hindu tradition the *Brāhma* form of marriage is a suitable one. It is a free gift of bride to the bridegroom; but the girl should be properly bedecked and bejewelled before the ceremony.[9] This system of marriage is very commonly practised even to-day in different parts of India.

Daiva

The *Daiva* form of marriage is another peculiar system of marriage among the ancient Hindus. According to this system the daughter is offered to the priest, when he is invited to

[1] *ṚV*, I.109-2.
[2] *The Mahābhārata*, Ādi Parva (Critical Edition), p. 105.
[3] *Raghuvaṁśa*, XI. 38.
[4] *Manusmṛti*, III. 29; *Arthaśāstra of Kautilya*, III, 11.151.
[5] Vide Saṁkhalikhita by P.V. Kane, *Annals of the Bhandarkar Research Institute*, VII-VIII, 1926-27; also *Nāradasmṛti*, XII. 41; *Āpastamba Dharma-sūtra*, 11. 5.11.18 *Āsvalayana Gṛhyasutra*, I.6.5.
[6] III, p. 196.
[7] *Chandragupta Maurya and His Times*, p. 152.
[8] McCrindle, J.W., *Ancient India*, Frag. XXVII, p. 57.
[9] *Manusmṛti*, III. 27; *Arthaśāstra of Kautilya*, III.11.151, *Kāmasūtra*, III.1.4-21.

perform sacrificial rites.[1] In that case the priest is not paid any fee *(Dakshiṇā)* by the sacrificer *(Hotrī)*, but he used to offer his daughter to him properly decorated with jewelleries. But this form of marriage cannot be popular in society, for the ancient caste system must raise a barrier against this practice.

Prājāpatya

The most popular form of marriage is, perhaps, *Prājāpatya.* Kālidāsa also upholds this system of marriage through the union of Hara and Pārvatī.[2] In this form of marriage, the father of the bride adorns his daughter with jewelleries and gives her away to the bridegroom after necessary rites and ceremonies. Generally, father of a young girl searches for a suitable person for her marriage. Sometimes the suitor through his agent approaches the father of the bride and "begs his daughter's hand in marriage."[3]

In our literature there are many references to *Svayaṁvara* (self-choice) which can also be regarded as the *Prājāpatya* form of marriage. In this case A. L. Basham holds an altogether different view; and in his opinion, "a special form of the *Gāndharva* marriage was the *Svayaṁvara* or self-choice."[4] But in a *Gāndharva* system of marriage the young maiden and her suitor settle their marriage secretly and it is generally performed without any rite and ceremony.

But in a *Svayaṁvara*, the guardians arrange for an assembly of suitors and the marriage takes place according to the Hindu rites after the selection is made by the maiden.[5] It can, thus, be taken as a special marriage function within the *Prājāpatya* system of marriage. Sometimes the young girl may have some special fascination for a particular suitor, as is the case of Indumatī and Aja;[6] but this is not done always by a maiden. The *Svayaṁvara* of Sītā and her sisters may be cited here and marriage presentations are lavishly offered by the parents to their sons in-law. For instance, Bhoja pays dowry to Aja

[1]*Manusmṛti*, III. 28.
[2]*Kumārasambhava*, Canto VII.
[3]*Ibid.*, VI, 84.
[4]*The Wonder that was India*, p. 169.
[5]*Raghuvaṁśa*, V.38, 39, 40, 61-65; VI.I.7-20; 67, 79-85; VII. 4-28.
[6]*Ibid.*

according to his ability at the marriage ceremony of his sister Indumatī.[1]

Gāndharva

The Gāndharva form of marriage is entirely an affair of love which consummates in a union without the proposal of marriage by the father of the bride. It proceeds entirely from free love and mutual inclination of a youth and a maiden and is concluded with the mutual consent and agreement of the couple without consulting their guardians. It is then ratified as a *fait accompli* under the Hindu law of *Factum Valet* by their parents.

But the Hindu rules of matrimony do not, in fact, approve explicitly of courtship; and in their opinion the problem of marriage is thought to be always important and its grave responsibility is not to be left to the discretion of the young folk. Kālidāsa praises a discreet daughter waiting for the consent of her father in the event of her marriage with her suitor.[2] With their vast worldly experience, the elders help their youngsters in search of a proper match. Mistakes by youngsters are supposed to be too many and wrong selection of mates in marriage are irretrievable, for they result in an extinction of life in society. Kālidāsa rightly observes, "a union, specially when in private, should be formed after careful examination. Friendship towards those, whose hearts are unknown, thus, turns into hostility."[3] In spite of that "Many daughters of kings and sages are reported to have been married by the Gāndharva form; and they are congratulated by their fathers."[4] The Gāndharva marriage is found in the union of Śakuntalā and Dushyanta.[5] Vātsyāyana, however, recognises this form of marriage as ideally good.[6]

Monogamy, Polygamy and Polyandry

All the enlightened people of the world previously and even to-day lay proper importance to monogamy. Some of our early

[1]*Raghuvaṁśa*, VII. 32.
[2]*Ibid*, V. 38.
[3]*Abhijñānaśākuntala*, V.24.
[4]*Ibid*, III.20.
[5]*Ibid.*
[6]*Kāmanḍakiya Nitisāra*, 11.5, 29-30.

Smṛtis disfavour polygamy, when the first wife has given birth to a male child[1] and the violator of this law is punished spiritually,[2] and legally by the loss of the right to stand for a witness in a law court.[3] Even when the second marriage is allowed for the sake of the continuity of race, the husband must take the consent of his first wife who is childless.[4]

According to our old tradition a marriage is needful only for the sake of children[5] and the woman has got no liberty and property right.[6] Thus, in such an age polygamy is its natural corollary; and at least the richer section of society and the Kṣhatriyas are very much inclined to polygamy. We can cite here a popular passage from Kālidāsa "The daughters of kings have found in Raghu their true husband."[7] Even the learned sage Yājñavalkya has two wives. Irāvatī and Dhāriṇī are the wives of Agnimitra and at least he is able to win the hands of Mālavikā.[8] King Daśaratha has three wives. Moreover, from our epigraphic records we are definite that Chandragupta II had at least two wives who were named as Dhruvadevī and Kuberanāgā. His son and successor, Kumāragupta I had more than one wife, for Mahādevī Anantadevī, his chief queen, was not the mother of his son Skandagupta.[9] Thus, in the days of Kālidāsa, nobles and rich men were often wedded to several wives.[10] The polygamous marriage, sometimes, helps a childless father a chance of having a son; but there is no denying the fact that it brings disorder and discontent in family life.

Due to the numerical disproportion between the two sexes, polyandrous system of marriages prevailed in that society. Even today this is practised by the aboriginal tribes of Tibet, Sikkim, Ladakh, Naga Hills and many other places of India. In the epic

[1] *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra*, 11.5; 11, 12.
[2] *The Mahābhārata*, XII, 58.13.
[3] *Nāradasmṛti*, I. 180.
[4] *Manusmṛti*, IX, 88.
[5] *Arthaśastra of Kautilya*, III, 11.153.
[6] Vide Codes of *Manusmṛti*.
[7] *Raghuvaṁśa*, III, 33, "Narendra Kanyastamavapya Satpatim."
[8] *Mālavikāgnimitra*.
[9] Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 52. (Bhitari Pillar Inscription and Junagarh Rock Inscription of Skandagupta.
[10] *Raghuvaṁśa*, I.32; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, p. 105; 219 and *Vikramorvaśiyam*, p. 140.

period we have a solitary reference of Draupadī who has five husbands living together.[1]

Other Marriage Practices

Bridegrooms are selected on the basis of good lineage and preferences are given to the solar or lunar race,[2] good character free from diseases and sufficient wealth. But one should avoid relationship with the families, where proper rites and ceremonies (Saṁskāras) are not performed and are not interested in the Vedic studies, where the members are suffering from leprosy or luco-derma, consumption, epilepsy or piles.[3] Education is also considered as an essential qualification.[4] The expected qualities of the bride are intelligence, fine sense of duty, good character, sound health and beauty and auspicious character.[5] In any case she must not be older than her husband.[6] Raghu sends his son Aja to marry Indumatī, knowing fully well that it will be a respectable marriage.[7] Even to-day we also carefully consider the above factors before our marriages.

Vātsyāyana does not recognise inter-caste marriage in the Gupta society;[8] and he prefers marriage with the same caste; but marital relation with inferior caste is considered by him as the sexual relation with a public woman.[9] But from our epigraphs and literature, we have many references of *Anuloma* and *Prati-loma* marriages. The Anuloma is the marriage with a maiden of a caste inferior to that of her male partner; but when the caste is reversed is called the Pratiloma. Both these systems prevailed in the classical age. One Bhānugupta of a Kṣhatriya family married Ravikirtti, a Brahmana by caste.[10] Similarly, Soma of a Brahmana family took a Kṣhatriya wife in addition to some of of his wives of the Brahmana family.[11] Virasena, a general and

[1] *The Mahābhārata.*
[2] *Raghuvaṁśa*, VII; also *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, II.52.
[3] *Manusmṛti*, III.7-8.
[4] *Kāmandakiya Nitīsāra*, 4.1.12.
[5] *Ibid*, 11.1.12; *Manusmṛti*, III.4; *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, I.52.
[6] *Kāmandakiya Nitisāra*, II.1.12.
[7] *Raghuvaṁśa*, V. 40.
[8] *Kāmandakiya Nitisāra*, I.5.6.
[9] Chakladar, H.C., *Social Life in Ancient India*, p. 87.
[10] Mandasor Inscription of Yasodharman, Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 152.
[11] Ghatotkacha cave Inscription of Hastibhoja, a minister of the Vaktaaka

half-brother of queen Dhāriṇī was "born of a step-mother of lower caste".[1] Again, Harichandra (*c.* 550 AD) of the Pratihāra family has both a Brahmana and Kṣhatriya wife.[2] These marriage practices are prevalent in the later period. Bāṇabhatta, the learned biographer of *Harshacharita*, was a Brahmana by caste; he had a step-brother from his Śūdra step-mother.[3] Although our law-givers like Manu, Yājñavalkya, Nārada, Brihaspati and others disfavour inter-caste marriages, this system of unpopular social practices continued to exist in early and mediaeval Indian society for a long time. Even to-day, it is not very much discouraged by our social thinkers.

Rituals and Ceremonies

Kālidāsa has given a good account of marriage rituals and ceremonies practised by the richer section of the society. On an auspicious day the father of the bride made some preparation for her marriage. It is generally fixed in the bright half (Sukla-Paksha) of the lunar month. For that ceremony, the highway leading to his house is decorated with silk-flags and floral-arches.[4] The gates of the houses are decorated with pitchers full of water. Relatives and friends bless her with jewelleries and with other presents.[5] In the blessed hour the Uttaraphālgunī joins the moon; married ladies having their male child[6] help her to take bath[7] and then anoint and decorate her body with cosmetics like Kaleyaka, saffron, lodhra dust, sandal paste and oil, with silken robes, jewelleries and flowers.[8]

The house of the bridegroom is also equally decorated for this ceremony.[9] By the married ladies of his house he is also anointed with different kinds of cosmetics and is adorned with jewels and jewelleries on the head, neck, arms, ears and wrists and used

Mahārāja Devasena, Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 152.

[1] *Mālavikāgnimitra*; Upadhyaya, B.S., *India in Kalidasa*, p. 185.

[2] *EI.* XVIII, p. 87.

[3] *Kumārasambhava*, VII. 1.

[4] *Ibid*, VII.3; *Raghuvaṁśa*, V, 63; VII.4.

[5] *Ibid*, 5.

[6] *Ibid*, 6.

[7] *Ibid*, 10.

[8] *Ibid*, 67, 21.

[9] *Ibid*, 30.

to put on silk robes.[1] The conches and musicians, then produce auspicious signs;[2] and the marriage party starts for the bride's house.[3] They are well received at the gate by the relatives of the bride and flowers are strewn over the procession.[4] The bridegroom and his party take a seat on a specially decorated pandal.[5] Honey, milk along with rich gems and a pair of silken robes are given to him; the priests also begin to chant the Vedic hymns.[6] He is, then, led to the bride by a group of her attendant and relatives.[7] The next rituals are looking at each other by the bridegroom and the bride and uttering of their *Gotra* at the presence of the sacred fire.[8] At length the priest led the hand of the bride on that of the bridegroom.[9] The symbols of Śiva and Pārvatī as the marital deities are performed and worshipped;[10] and then the priest chants the Vedic incantations (mantras) which are repeated by the bridegroom. After that the couple moves seven steps (saptapadī) and moves round the sacred fire thrice in solemn rite.[11] The bride, then, throws a handful of parched rice (Lāja) to the fire.[12] Thereafter the priest blesses the couple with the following words – "This sacred fire is the witness of your marriage. Be a faithful husband and a true wife."[13] The bridegroom then, addresses his wife: "Look up, gentle lady, do you see the brightness of the pole star? Your faith must shine like that unchanging ray."[14] His wife, then, replies, "Yes, I see."[15] The married couple, then, finally sits on a vedī (raised seat) and the auspicious grains with grass (durvā) are scattered over their head by their senior relatives in the form of blessing.[16] These

[1]*Kumārasambhava*, 32, 33.
[2]*Ibid*, 40.
[3]*Ibid.*
[4]*Ibid*, VII, 52.55.
[5]*Ibid*, 9.
[6]*Ibid*, 72 (Madhuparka).
[7]*Ibid*, 73.
[8]*Raghuvaṁśa*, VI.20 (Paraspara-Samkirtana, Gotrachchara).
[9]*Kumarasambhava*, VII.76.
[10]*Ibid*, 78.
[11]*Ibid*, 79, 80.
[12]*Ibid*, 81.
[13]*Ibid*, 83.
[14]*Ibid*, 85.
[15]*Ibid*,
[16]*Ibid*, 88

are the rituals pertaining to the Prājāpatya form of marriage.

After the marriage ceremony mirth and merriment follow; it includes singing, dancing and dramatic performance.[1] The couple is left alone in a soft bed of flowers and near it auspicious golden pitchers are placed; they, then, start, their excursion of pleasure, a honeymoon.[2] This can be taken as a consummation of marriage and this practice is still current in many parts of India.

At the time of her departure from her father's house with her husband, she is decorated and adorned with jewelleries, sandal-paste, lodhra dust, kumkum, gorochanā and durvā grass.[3] She puts on white silk garments and her feet are reddened with lac-dye. She then moves around of a newly kindled fire.[4] Kanva has given a very valuable advice to Śakuntalā on that auspicious occasion. "Serve your elders, act that part of a dear friend towards your co-wives; though ill-treated by your husband never go against in anger, be extremely courteous towards your servants; be not puffed up in fortune; in this way do young women attain the position of housewife; the perverse are the banes of their family".[5] The position of a housewife (gṛihiṇī or matron) is always considered honourable for a woman. Kanva further states, "Having become for a long time the co-wife of the Earth, bounded by the four oceans, and having settled your son by Dushyanta, an unrivalled warrior, you will make your abode in this tranquil hermitage again along with your husband, who will have transferred the responsibility of his family or him."[6] Although the above blessings and advice are given to a would-be queen, the spirit embodied in it is quite significant in the Hindu society. As soon as the couple reaches their house, they are well received by the inmates of the house and certain rites and ceremonies follow there.[7]

[1]*Kumārasambhava*, VII.91.
[2]*Ibid*, 94; VIII.1.
[3]*Abhijñānaśākuntala*, p. 125, 127.
[4]*Ibid*, p. 133.
[5]*Ibid*, IV.17.
[6]*Ibid*, 19.
[7]*Raghuvaṁśa*, VII, 32, 33; XI, 57; XVIII, 1; *Kumārasambhava*, VII, 85 (Gṛhapravesa, Madhuparka and Badhu-varana, Dhruv Arundhati-darsanam, etc.).

By sanctioning divorce our early thinkers do certain justice to some unfortunate ladies of our society. She is permitted to divorce her husband if he is impotent or a sage or an out-caste.[1] But there can be no dissolution in the Brāhma, Ārsha, Daiva and Prājāpatya forms of marriages. In the remaining four forms of marriages, divorce is allowed between husband and wife by mutual agreement.[2]

Wife

The lot of Hindu wife in the early society was not an mixed blessing. Regarding thier position the law-givers' (Śāstrakāras) statements in many cases are sometimes self-contradictory and misleading. In many respects these law-givers appeared as regulators of morals and as such dealt mostly with ideal norms which sometimes differ from the real set-up of the society. But the contemporary epigraphs and coins help us very little in this respect.

By virtue of her marriage a lady comes to live with her husband and it is the blessed duty of her husband to protect and maintain her; and according to our Hindu concept both are identical.[3] She is loved and respected by her husband and is described by Kālidāsa as the matron, counsellor with reference to the domestic duties, a friend in retirement, and a dear pupil in fine arts.[4] By virtue of such an elevated position she had to perform several family duties. She has to look after the personal needs of her husband, such as, food, drink, toilet and amusements. She also appreciates his likes and dislikes, receives his relatives and friends with proper care and respect, loves his parents and other relatives and is sympathetic towards his servants. Without bringing to his notice, she is not expected to donate anything to others. She should avoid the company of women of questionable character, such as, female ascetics, actors and actresses, fortune-tellers and others; and taking due permission from her husband she may acquire sex-knowledge from the

[1] *Nāradasmṛti*, XII, 97; *Arthaśāstra of Kautilya*, translated by R. Shamasastry.

[2] *Nāradasmṛti*, XII, 91; *Arthaśāstra of Kautilya*, translated by R. Shamasastry, p. 176.

[3] *Manusmṛti*, IX. 3, 45.

[4] *Raghuvaṁśa*, VIII, 67; X. 55.

Kāmasūtra of Vātsyāyana.[1] On the occasion of her departure to the house of Dushyanta, Kaṇva has given such type of advice to Śakuntalā.[2]

A house wife must be quite intelligent to prepare her family budget for the whole year and to regulate the expenditure in keeping with their family income.[3] Her store should contain all kinds of articles necessary for consumption and should replenish the store if and when necessary. She must have fair knowledge in calculating the salaries of servants and should look after their agriculture, cattle, other domestic animals and birds. This is not all. She prepares food and is expected to have some knowledge in spinning cotton and weaving.[4]

In respect of Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Moksha both man and his wife are united together till death separates them.[5] To gain the fruits of religious practices both of them should work together and is, thus, called Sahadharmiṇi.[6] It is the son offered by the wife that makes the husband free from the debt to his father and other ancestors (Pitṛ-ṛiṇa). In the morning and evening she performs certain rites and offering of flowers, sandal pastes, durvā grass and incense to her family deity and takes vows and other religious observances for the good of her family.[7] Thus in the social and religious ceremonies of a king, the chief queen (Mahādevī) plays a very significant role. On the obverse of the Aśvamedha type of the gold coins of Samudragupta and his grandson Kumāragupta I only the bust of the chief queen is there and not of the king.[8] She can offer money and lands to the Brāhmaṇas, śramaṇas, temples and monasteries.[9] She has exclusive rights over Strīdhana which is nothing but the presentation of jewelleries, money and other valuables by her parents, brothers, sisters, husband and their relatives at her marriage.[10]

[1] *Kāmandakiya Nītisāra*, III. 1.5.9.41,
[2] *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, IV. 17.
[3] *Kāmasūtra*, III. 1. 32.
[4] *Ibid*, III. 1. 33; Chakladar, *SLAI*, p. 175-76.
[5] *Manu*. IX. 101.
[6] *Ibid*, I. 32.
[7] *Kāmasūtra*, III. 1.15, 51-53.
[8] Altekar, *Coinage*.
[9] *JASB* (*NS*), XX, p. 58; *EI*, XV, p. 41.
[10] *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, II. 143.

By virtue of her intelligence and ability she can rise upto the head of the state. The Chandragupta-Kumāradevī type of gold coins of Chandragupta I of the Imperial Gupta dynasty raises questions of constitutional significance. "Was Kumāradevī a reigning queen as Queen Mary II of England who ruled jointly with William III and whose coinage bore the names and effigies of both sovereigns."[1] At least she must have definite influence over the day-to-day administration of the country. "Similarly, the coins bearing the legend "Di-Ksena-gupta" remind us of another statement of Kalhaṇa, that the king Kśhemagupta was so much under the influence of the queen Diddā that he "became known by the humiliating appellation Diddā-Kṣhema".[2] This problem is further complicated by the fact that later on Diddā struck coins in her name alone.[3] Moreover, the Vākāṭaka queen Prabhâvatīguptā, the daughter of Chandragupta II, after the pre-mature death of her husband, had to rule this kingdom on behalf of her sons nearly quarter of a century. The status of the queen is further ascertained from our literary evidences; she assumes the titles of Devi,[4] Rani,[5] Mahishi,[6] Mahādevi,[7] Bhaṭṭini;[8] she thus, enjoys a respectable position as a wife of the king.

But according to our ancient tradition she does not enjoy absolute liberty; many restrictions are imposed on her day to day activities. She should not stand at the door and not to look at the people in the streets from the windows. Even when she hastens to meet her husband who is coming home, she is not to go out on the street to meet him, but to wait for him in his house.[9] She should not drink wine, mix with other people, stay separately from her husband, move about like a vagaband and stay in other man's house, because the women in general are fickle minded, quickly change their affection for others and feel

[1]Maity, S. K., *Early Indian Coins and the Currency System*, p. 9.
[2]*Ibid*, p. 6.
[3]*Ibid*, p. 8.
[4]*Raghuvaṁsa*, III. 70; V. 36; XIV. 32.
[5]*Ibid*, I. 57.
[6]*Ibid*, VIII. 82; XIV. 5.
[7]Sircar, *Select Ins.*, p. 259.
[8]*Mālavikāgnimitra*, III. 76.
[9]*Kāmandakiya Nītisāra*, III. 1. 22.

conjugal desire with others at the very first sight and those bring discord and misfortune in their family life.[1]

The position of woman further deteriorates due to early marriages and for the inclusion of non-Aryan girls into the Aryan family. She is gradually denied the active participation of the family rites, like Jātakarma, Chuḍākaraṇa, Upanayana, Srāddha etc. and not to chant the Vedic incantations (Mantras) and not to read the Vedas, Smṛtis and other Śāstras.[2]

Again, during the long absence of her husband, she puts off all her jewelleries and fineries except shell bangles[3] which have similarity with the fate of the Yaksha's wife as portrayed in the *Meghadūta.* She is entirely unmindful of her clothes and very often sheds tears; instead of sleeping on bed she sleeps on floor; she left her hair unoiled and uncombed and does not cut her nails. In other words she renounces every article of luxury.[4] Quite incidentally the above description of Kālidāsa has identical reference in the Chinese classics. Hsu-Kan of the third Century AD writes—

"O floating clouds tbat swim in heaven above,
Bear on your wings these words to him I love . . . ."[5]

In spite of the above shortcomings, her position and family prestige are not absolutely deplorable. There is a popular saying, 'Gṛhinī Gṛhamucyate'—the lady is the house. She is, thus, treated by her husband as the minister regarding all domestic affairs, a friend in retirement, and a dear pupil in fine arts.[6] A good wife always considers her husband as her living god and all her passions and desires are infused together.[7] She always addresses her husband as the son of the venerable one (Ārya-putra)[8] and her devotion and attachment to her husband is remarkable. She always aspires after his undivided love and affection.

[1]*Manusmṛti,* IX. 13, 15.

[2]*Ibid,* IX. 18.

[3]*Kāmandakiya Nītisāra,* III. 1. 42; also *Yājñavalkyasmṛti,* I. 84.

[4]*Meghadūta,* 21-25, 29-32.

[5]Giles, H. A., *History of the Chinese Literature,* pp. 119-20, as quoted in *JASB,* no. I, I, 1959, p. 103 by S. K. Chatterjee.

[6]*Raghuvaṁśa,* VIII. 67.

[7]*Kumārasambhava,* VI, 86; *Raghuvaṁśa.* IX. 17, XIV. 74, *Abhijñāna-śākuntala,* p. 240.

[8]*Mālavikāgnimitra,* pp. 48, 57.

Widow and the Custom of Sati

The status of a wife in family and society suffers a sudden set-back immediately after the death of her husband. She has to maintain strict *celibacy*, self-restraint and a very hard and austere life. Her social existence is duly recognised in our literature.[1] She is prohibited from participating in all the auspicious ceremonies like Upanayana, marriages, etc. for only the unwidowed dames can decorate the person of the bride and bridegroom before their marriages.[2] In the *Abhijñānaśākuntala* there is a reference of the widows of the great merchant, Dhanamitra.[3] Moreover, a widow, who is carrying a foetus should keep away from the funeral pyre of her husband.[4]

The remarriage of widows and other women are not at all popular in society,[5] but the *Amarakośa*[6] and *Kāmasūtra*[7] refer to the remarriages of widows (Punarbhū). Sometimes, remarried widow becomes the principal wife of a twice-born.[8] Early thinkers like Kauṭilya, Nārada and others also recommend marriage of a woman whose husband is dead, has become an ascetic or impotent, or has gone abroad for a long time.[9] According to Vātsyāyana, a Punarbhū can select her own partner, and can stay with him as husband and wife. By virtue of her intelligence and charming beauty she sometimes plays the role of a mistress in her lover's house, loving her co-wives, friendly to his companions and generous to his servants. She also joins in festivities, garden and drinking parties and unlike the wedded wife she has the freedom of leaving his lover's house. But, her social life stands midway between the virgin (Kanyā) and the harlot, and between the queens (devī) and the courtesans (gaṇikā).[10] It, thus, follows from Vātsyāyana that a widow can

[1] *Kumārasambhava*, IV. 1; *Malavikāgnimitra*, p. 99.
[2] *Kumārasambhava*, VII. 6.
[3] *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, p. 219, also *Mālavikāgnimitra*, p. 99.
[4] *Raghuvaṁśa*, XIX, 56.
[5] Majumdar and Pusalker, *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 565.
[6] *Ibid.*, II, 6. 23.
[7] *Kāmandakiya Nītisāra*, IV. 1.5.4.; 2.39-59; 4. 75-78.
[8] Majumdar and Pusalker, *The Classical Age*, p. 572.
[9] *Nāradasmṛti*, XII, 45; Majumdar and Pusalker, *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 656.
[10] *Kāmandakiya Nītisāra*, IV. 1.5.4.; 2.39-59: 4.75-78.

live with her lover but never enjoys the status of a married wife.

But early law-givers like Manu, Yājñavalkya and others prohibit the re-marriages of widows,[1] they perhaps agree with Bṛihaspati who recommends the burning of widows on the funeral pyre of her husband.[2] She becomes, thus, Satī. Again, the term, Satī means real, true, good and virtuous.[3] But the sense of truthfulness, goodness and virtuousness changes with the change of time, place and person. In ancient, mediaeval and even in the nineteenth century AD a Satī means a lady of true, good and virtuous character who sacrifices herself on the funeral pyre of her husband. There are many references of Satī in the works of Kālidāsa[4] and the custom of Satī is also extolled by Varāhamihira in his *Bṛhat Saṁhita.*[5]

Goparāja accompanied the king Bhānugupta for fighting against the Huṇas, but he lost his life in the battlefield and his wife accompanied him on the funeral pyre[6]. . . . It is, perhaps, the age old practice among the early Indians and it is not a new invention in the Classical age. By sacrificing her life with her dead husband, a Satī dwells in heaven for a long time and is looked upon as Arundhatī and is praised in heaven.[7] After the death of Kṛishṇa his five wives follow him in his funeral pyre. His another wife, Satyabhāmā retires to the forest to practise penance throughout her life.[8]

The Courtesan (Gaṇikā)

A prostitute noted for her beauty, youth and accomplishment is appointed as their superintendent.[9] The beautiful Āmrapālī is a noted courtesan of Vaiśālī.[10] By her grace and charm, beauty and youth she enjoys good social position,[11] which was not found

[1] *Manusmṛti*, V. 156-7; *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, I. 75.
[2] *VV.* 483-4.
[3] Hastings, James, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, XI, p. 207.
[4] *Kumārasambhava*, VII, 20-22, 33, 35, 45.
[5] LXXXIV. 16.
[6] Eran Inscription of Goparaja: Sircar, *Select Ins.*
[7] Angiras Sankhya quoted from the *History of Dharmaśāstra*, II, I, p. 631; also *AV*, XVIII. 2. ; *Āpastamba Grihyasūtra*, IV, 2. 18.
[8] *The Mahābhārata.*
[9] *Arthaśāstra of Kautilya.*
[10] Ref. Vinaya Texts of the Mulasarvastivadas, *B.C. Law Volume*, I, p. 37,
[11] *Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya.*

anywhere else in the world except perhaps in Athens. In the *Mrichchakaṭika* of Śūdraka, we find Vasantasenā as a very dignified lady who has excelled in the art of acting, singing, dancing and painting and ultimately she is able to unite her lover, Chārudutta, Brahmin by caste.[1]

For the qualification and the attainment of a courtesan the *Kāmasūtra* has close similarity with the *Daśakumāracharita* of Daṇḍin of a little later period. She is to be tenderly nursed by her mother from her birth; she is to be trained in the arts of singing, dancing, acting and painting, cooking, preparing perfumes, reading, writing and speaking with ready wit and in the elements of grammar, logic and astrology; she is to receive practical lessons in the science of Erotics; she is to appear with a large retinue at public festivals; her auspicious marks and accomplishments are to be advertised among townsmen and a high price set upon her favour.[2] Such type of aged girls are also engaged in the temple service for long time and is known as Devadāsī.[3]

Some Observations

The status of women is generally inferior to that of man; but her position in family and society is welcoming and dignified. Mahâdevī Kumāradevī, wife of Chandragupta I was a dignified lady who had some influence over the administration of the Gupta empire.[4] The Vākaṭaka queen Prabhāvatīguptā, daughter of Chandragupta II, ruled her kingdom for nearly a quarter of a century on behalf of her infant sons.[5] Many of the ladies of this period are highly educated and accomplished.[6] Moreover, many well-to-do families used to educate their daughters and they are treated as the very life of the family.[7] They are sometimes much more practical and cunning in their family affairs than their male-counterparts.[8]

[1]Ref. Vinaya texts of the Mulasarvastivadas, *B.C. Law Volume*, I, p. 137.
[2]*Kāmandakiya Nitisāra*, I, 3, 20-21.
[3]*Mrichchkaṭika*, I and IV.
[4]*Dasakumarcharita*, pp. 66-68.
[5]*Meghadūta*, I 36; *HIL*, II, 254.
[6]Chandragupta-Kumardevi type of gold coins, Altekar, *Coinage*; Fleet, *CII*, III.
[7]*Kumarasambhava*, VI. 63 (Kanya Kuljivitam).
[8]*Abhijñanśākuntala*, V. 22, p. 172.

Nevertheless, it can be said that the wife is endeared and loved by her husband, who has a respectful attitude towards her.[1] She also feels some sort of attachment for her husband.[2] Indeed, one cannot forget the status of a woman as a mother who is considered as a gem in her family,[3] for a son will maintain his family line and save the family from the debt incurred by the departed ancestors (Pitṛ-ṛina). A mother of a valiant son is always desirable.[4] They also used to discharge many essential services to the family. Kanva appointed Śakuntalā to look after his guests in his absence.[5]

Some sort of seclusion of women folk was not unknown in this age; their modesty was always considered as their capital virtue. Śakuntalā feels blushful to go near her elders in company with her husband.[6] When she goes out of her house, she used to cover her body with a veil.[7] However, they are not absolutely confined to their homes. Even they have the freedom to take bath in a river[8] and they used to attend different ceremonies in the house of their relatives and neighbours.[9] As they look after different household duties, they also pay proper attention to flowers, trees and plants. For blossoming trees and plants they use different methods; they help the blossoming of the red Aśoka tree by touching it with her left foot,[10] they spate wine on Vakula tree for flowering.[11] They playfully arrange marriages of mango trees with various beautiful creepers, like Priyangu, Mādhavī and Nabamālikā.[12] Thus, a filial attachment to plants and trees is found in the hearts of Śakuntalā, Umā and Sītā. Again, the wife of the Yakṣha has adopted a Mandāra tree as her son.[13]

1 *Raghuvaṁśa*, X. 55.
2 *Meghadūta*, 8, 21-32 (Pathetic disposition of exiled Yakṣha's wife).
3 *Raghuvaṁśa*, VII. 34 (Stṛ-ratna).
4 *Mālavikāgnimitra*, V. 16.
5 *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, p. 22.
6 *Ibid*, V. 13, p. 168.
7 *Ibid*, V. 13.
8 *Meghadūta*, p. 33.
9 *Raghuvaṁśa*, VII. 16, *Kumārasambhava*, VII. 6.
10 *Mālavikāgnimitra*, III. 125; *Meghadūta*, II. 17.
11 *Raghuvaṁśa*, IX. 30; *Meghadūta*. II, 1.
12 *Raghuvaṁśa*, VIII. 61; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, I, 55, IV. 106; *Mālavikāguimitra*, IV. 138.
13 *Raghuvaṁśa*, II. 14.

FOOD AND DRINK, DRESS, JEWELLERY AND TOILET

Food

Early Indian life is also reflected through their food habits, dress and jewellery, superstitious beliefs, crime and punishment, hygienic habits and above all their standard of living. According to the description of Kālidāsa their food is both delicious and nutritious. Barley, wheat, and rice are their staple food. Several varieties of rice are also available and they are Śāli, Kalama, nīvāra, uncha-paddy and śyāmāka-paddy.[1] Varāhamihira adds three further kinds of paddy, red rice, yellow rice and hog's rice.[2] The *Amarakośa*, however, classifies fields fit for different kinds of important crops, such as, wheat, rice, barley, sesamum and pulses;[3] and the other varieties of food crops are peas, lentil, beans, wheat and pulses.[4] The cucumber, onion, garlic, pumpkin and gourd are used as vegetables.[5]

We have ample references to edible spices, oil-crops and medicinal herbs in our period. Mustard seed, sesamum, linseed, tamarind, black mustard, long pepper, pepper, cardamoms, cloves, large cardamoms, small cardamoms, spikenard, betel-nut, ginger, turmeric, ingudi and saffron are used for different purposes.[6] Moreover, the forests and gardens yield a large variety of valuable fruits, such as mango, palmyra and palm fruit, orange, jack fruit, pomegranate, grapes, banana, coconut and wild date.[7] These are the most common and popular fruits even today in India.

[1] *Ṛtusaṁhāra*, III. 1, 10, 16; IV. 1.8.18; V.1, 16; *Raghuvaṁśa*, 50, IV.20. 37; V.8, XV. 78; XVII. 53, *Kumārasambhava*, V. 47; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, I; *Kumārasambhava*, V.47.

[2] *Bṛhaspatismṛti*, XIX, 4-6; XXIX, 2.

[3] *Amarkośa*, 9.6-8, pp. 201-2; Legge, *Record of the Buddhistic Kingdoms*, p. 23.

[4] *Ibid*, 9.8; 16-18, pp. 202-04; *Kumārasambhava*, VII.17, *Bṛhaspatismṛti*, VIII 130; XXV.2; XXIV. 4-6.

[5] *Amarkośa*, 4.118. p. 110; 4. 148. p. 118; 4.149, p. 118; 4.156, p. 120.

[6] *Ibid*, 4.44.46, 97, 125, 126, 134, 160, 170; 9.17-20, 35, 37, 41, pp. 91, 92, 203-05. 207, 112, 114, *Bṛhatsaṁhita*, V.75; X. 12, XXV. 2; *Raghuvaṁśa*, IV.46; *Kumārasambhava*, VIII. 25.

[7] *Amarkośa*, 4.33. p. 88 (amra); 4.38, p. 90; 4.61, p. 96; 4.65, p. 97, 4.169, p. 123; 4.108, p. 108; 4.113, p. 109; 4.170, p. 128; 5.10, p. 353; 5.42, p. 356;

They are in the habit of taking animal food and they used to domesticate cow, goat, ram and hog for variety of purposes.[1] Along with them fish, crab, pigeon, heron, fowl, crane, goose and duck are the favourite food stuff of the day.[2] But Fa-hien observes, "Throughout the whole country the people do not kill any living creature, nor drink intoxicating liquor, nor eat onions or garlic. The only exception is that of the chandalas . . . . . In that country (Madhyadeśa) they do not keep pigs and fowls, and do not sell live cattle; in the markets there are no butchers' shops and no dealers in intoxicating drink."[3] Thus, Fa-hien leads us to believe that the people of Madhyadeśa were purely vegetarians. But the evidence of Kālidāsa and others proves beyond doubt that meat diet and liquor were quite familiar, at that time. In the Maurya period even the Buddhist king Aśoka did not prohibit meat-eating altogether.[4] As Dr. Saletore rightly points out perhaps the observation of Fa-hien was one sided. He, "being an ardent Buddhist, probably moved only in Buddhist circles and Buddhists being invariably vegetarians, though there were exceptions even among them, his remarks are evidently confined to their own activities."[5] During the time of Fa-hien's visit there were several thousand Buddhist monks and their followers in India, and they were certainly vegetarians. There were many Jain monks too in this country. Lay followers of both sects were numerous; and there is no doubt that a considerable proportion of the population did not kill living animals for food or sacrifice. Of course, it cannot be denied that the rest of the Hindu society did not follow the principle of ahiṁsā. They killed animals, when they needed to do so.

However, the cows supply them with various foods, such as

Raghuvaṁśa, VI. 69 (Sahakara); VII. 21 (Cuta) *Ṛtusaṁhāra*, VI, 1.3, 15, 22, 26, 27, 30 and 34; Legge, *Record of the Buddhistic Kingdoms*, p. 24, Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 72.

[1]*Amarkośa*, 9 58-62m, p. 213; 9.76, p. 217; 9.77, p. 217; 10.23, p. 230; *Raghuvaṁśa*, I, 88; II, 1, 4, 15, 21, 26, 49; *Nāradasmṛti*, XI. 30-31.

[2]*Amarkośa*, 5, 15, 16, 18, 20, 23-26, pp. 127-29; 9.17-19, 21; *Raghuvaṁśa*, 1.73; IV.19; V.75; VII.40; XIII 30,33, XVI.61; *Kumārasambhava*, IV.39, *Ṛtusaṃhara*, Section, I.5, 19, 21; III 1, 2, 8, 16.

[3]Legge, *Record of the Buddhistic Kingdoms*, p. 43.

[4]Rock Edict Inscription: Hultzsch, *CII*, I, p. 1.

[5]Saletore, *Life in the Gupta Age*, p. 116.

milk, curds, clarified butter, fresh butter, butter-milk and whey and hardly a single religious ceremony was performed without them.[1] We have seen that in many of our inscriptions *caru*, prepared from milk and rice is mentioned. Moreover, the frequent use of clarified butter is referred to in our literature and law-books.[2] Sugar and salt are also used for variety of purposes.[3] Cultivation of sugarcane and the sugar industry were widespread. Thus, the songs associated with the autumn sugarcane and rice fields are referred to in the *Raghuvaṁśa*.[4] Sugar was manufactured from the juice of sugar-cane, for in the *Amarakośa* we have references to raw sugar and refined sugar.[5] Various kinds of sweet-meats (modaka) are prepared out of milk and sugar.[6] Honey was another item of food which was also used in the reception of a guest and at other festive rites.[7]

Drink

Drinking of wine appears to have been an extensive habit of the people; but its after-effects are sometimes bad.[8] Not only men but even women often indulged in drinking. It was believed that intoxication gave a special charm to women.[9] Iravati, a wife of Agnimitra is seen in a state of intoxication,[10] and Indumati received wine from the mouth of her husband Aja.[11] Again, Śiva himself drank wine and compelled Pārvatī to drink it.[12] Moreover, in course of their campaigns in the south the whole army of Raghu drank "wine extracted from the cocoa-nuts."[13] It is perhaps not wine; but it is simply the juice of it.

[1]*Amarkośa*, 9.51, 52, 53, 54, pp. 211-212; *Raghuvaṁśa*, I 45; II.63; X.51, 54.

[2]Fleet, *CII*, III; *Nāradasmṛti*, I.61.

[3]*Raghuvaṁśa*, V.73.

[4]*Bṛhatsaṁhitā*, VIII.30; XIX. 16-18; *Amarkośa*, 4.164, p 122; Legge, *Record of the Buddhistic Kingdoms*, p. 24; *Raghuvaṁśa*, IV. 20.

[5]*Amarkośa*, 3-42, p. 279; 9.43, p. 209.

[6]*Vikramorvasiyam*, p. 65.

[7]*Kumārasambhava*, VII.72.

[8]*Kumārasambhava*, IV.12; VIII.80.

[9]*Ibid*, III.38.

[10]*Mālavikāgnimitra*, p. 49.

[11]*Raghuvaṁśa*, VIII.68.

[12]*Kumārasambhava*, VIII.77.

[13]*Raghuvaṁśa*, IV, 42; also *India in Kalidasa*, p. 195.

We have, thus, references to the drinking peg, a grogshop on the road side, and to an open place of drinking abounding in drinking cups.[1] Kālidāsa refers to intoxicated women and young women taking delight in drinking wine.[2] Policemen, soldiers, even common people are in the habit of drinking to a greater extent[3] and thus liquor was perhaps a common beverage throughout the country.

Dress

Suiting all occasions and weather men and women used various kinds of dresses.[4] Kālidāsa also refers to hunting-dress, and dress of love-sick person, the courtesans, persons observing vow, ascetic and the ceremonial dresses of men and women.[5] The dresses of men and women are rather simple. Man generally puts on three pieces of garments, such as loin-cloth (dhoti), turban (Ushṇisha or Veshtana) and a scarf (Uttarīya).[6] They are generally made of cotton but their wedding dresses are of silk and sometimes figures of swans and flowers are beautifully woven.[7] Ladies also use bodice (kurpāsaka or Stanaṁśuka), loin-cloth (sārī) and shawl covering the major part of the body.[8] A pair of silk garments used as bodice and loin-cloth are used by the bride and the newly wedded wife (nababadhū) put on a red bodice.[9] All are exhibited from the numerous sculptures,

[1] *Raghuvaṁśa*, IV. 42; VII. 49; XIX. 11; *Kumārasambhava*, VI. 42; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, p. 188.

[2] *Raghuvaṁśa*, IV.75.

[3] *Abhijnānaśākuntala*, IV. 65; VI; *Raghuvaṁśa*, II. 42, 61; IV. 42; XVI. 52; *Ṛtusaṁhāra*, I. 3; IV. 11; VI. 10.

[4] *Raghuvaṁśa*, V. 76; VI. 10; IX. 50; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, p. 68.

[5] *Raghuvaṁśa*, IX. 50; X. 77; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, p. 28; I.17; p. 68; VII. 21; *Vikramorvasiyam*, III. 12; p. 68; *Mālvikāgnimitra*, pp. 90, 96; V. 7, 10.

[6] *Raghuvaṁśa*, I. 42; VII. 18, 19; VIII. 12; XVI. 43; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, p. 218.

[7] *Raghuvaṁśa*, XVII. 25; *Kumārasambhava*, V. 67.

[8] *Raghuvaṁśa*, VI. 9, 10, 75; VII. 18, 19; X. 8; XI. 4,26; XIX. 25; *Kumārasambhava*, I, 14; V. 67; VII. 60; VIII. 4; *Ṛtusaṁhāra*, I. 7; IV. 3, 16; V. 8; VI. 4, 8, 19; *Vikramorvasiyam*, III. 12; IV. 17; V. 12; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, V. 13.

[9] See Griffith, John, *The Painting of the Buddhist Cave Temples of India*; Altekar, *Coinage*; Allan, *BMCGD* and Rapson *BMCAD*; Smith, V. A., *Catalogue of the Coins in the Indian Museum*, Calcutta, vol. I, pt. I, The

paintings and coins of the Gupta age.[1]

Clothes were of various colours, such as white, red, blue, saffron, multicoloured and black.[2] Apart from colours, cloth was made of various patterns suitable for the hot and cold weathers and both the silk and woollen clothes were used by them.[3] Silk was woven with the fine patterns of the figures of flemingoes; and fine Chinese silk (Chinaṁśuka) were also used by the rich people. Some are made of such a thin texture that they can be easily blown away by the breath[4] and it, thus reminds us about the existence of the famous Indian muslin.

At least from the time of the Kushāṇas the cut and sewn garments were also commonly used by them; and the right-fitting jackets, trousers, bodices and cap were used by them.[5] Thus the tailors were needed to prepare them in keeping with the taste of the people.

Jewellery

Different kinds of jewellery were commonly used by both men and women of this period. Kālidāsa has referred to various types of jewellery used by them, such as, ornaments for head and hair (chuḍāmaṇi, ratnajāla, muktājāla, kirifa), ears (karṇabhūṣaṇa, karṇapura, kuṇḍala, maṇikuṇḍala), neck, (kaṇṭhe, muktāvali, tārāhara, sthulamuktāhārah, hāra, hāraśe-khara, hārayashṭi, śuddha ekavalī, vaijayantikā, hemapralama and mālā), arm (aṅgada, keyūra, valaya), waist (mekhalā, hemamekhalā, kāñchi, kanakakāñcī, kiṅkiṇī and raśanā), feet (nūpura) and fingers (aṅgulīya, anguliyaka).[6] The large variety

Early Foreign Dynasties and the Guptas pt. II, Ancient Coins of Indian Types.

1 *Raghuvaṁśa*, XVII. 25 *Kumārasambhava*, V. 67; *Ṛtusaṁhāra*, VI. 19.

2 *Raghūvaṁśa*, I.46; VI.6; IX.43; XV.77; *Kumārasambhava*, III.54; *Ṛtu-saṁhāra*, II.25; III.26; VI.4.19; *Vikramorvasiyam*, III.12; IV.17.

3 *Ṛtusaṁhāra*, V.8; *Mālavikāgnimitra*, V.12, p. 105.

4 *Raghuvaṁśa*, XVI.43; XVII.25; *Kumārasambhava*, V.67; VII. 3.

5 Altekar, *Coinage*.

6 *Raghuvaṁśa*, V.52, 65, 70; VI. 14, 16, 18, 19, 43, 53, 65, 68, 73; VII. 10, 27, 50; VIII. 63, 64; X.51; XIII. 3, 23, 33; XIV. 54; XVI. 12, 43, 56, 60, 62, 65, 73; XVIII. 45; XIX. 25, 26, 27, 41, 45. *Kumārasambhava*, 1, 4, 34, 37, 38; II. 49; III. 53; VII. 21; VIII. 89; *Ṛtusaṁhāra*, I, 4, 5, 6, 8; II 19, 25; III. 19, 24, 25; IV. 2.3, 4; VI. 2, 6, 24, 56. *Mālavikāgnimitra*, III, 21; V. 7;

of jewellery used by men and women are seen from the Ajantā paintings.[1] Thus, the members of the royal family, nobles and the rich people use ear-rings, necklace, bracelets, armlets, girdles, finger-rings, etc. on their person and they are usually made of gold, silver and of various other precious stones. But the poor people used jewellery made of silver and copper.

From the Bhita excavation we have a few specimens of such ornaments, including one gold ring, one hollow gold bead, two miniature gold beads joined together, a flat wheel of gold with axle and spokes and a disc of gold embossed with a human face.[2] Moreover, the Mandasor inscription of Kumāragupta I and Bandhuvarman refers to women wearing necklace (hāra). The Malia copper plate of Dharasena II relates the hair ornaments of the subdued kings.[3] We have also numerous coins depicting the king, queen, gods and goddesses wearing jewellery. We thus see that the manufacture of jewellery was most flourishing at that time.

From the point of view of ancient economists, jewellery was one of the important means of saving. But the modern orthodox economist may perhaps regret that so much wealth should have been locked up in so unremunerative an investment as ornaments. It is perhaps true that there were not many safe and productive sources of investment in our period. Moreover, from the standpoint of the women who formed half of the population, the habit of investing a considerable part of the family savings in jewellery was very desirable. It should not be forgotten that for a long time women were denied the right to have a share in the immovable property of the family. Thus, according to Nārada, females are not entitled to bestow gifts, or to sell property. But a woman had full rights over movable property such as jewellery. This was known as strīdhana and could not be taken away from a woman by coparceners.[4] The

pp. 4, 28, 36, 59, 73, 87, 92, 104. *Vikramorvasiyam*, I, 15; III. 15; IV. 30; V. 2; pp. 38, 68; 100, 122, 123; *Meghadūta*, pp. 9, 11, 12, 35. *Abhijñāna-śākuntala*, III.10; VI.6, 12; pp. 47, 49, 120, 146.

[1]Griffiths, John, *The Paintings in the Buddhist Cave Temples of Ajanta.*

[2]*ASIAR*, 1911-12, p. 92.

[3]Fleet *CII*, III, p. 82, 11; p. 166, 11.

[4]*Nāradasmṛti*, VII,8; XIII.8; 25—Also *Manusmṛti*, IX. 200.

more the amount invested in her ornaments, the stronger, therefore, would be the economic position of a woman. The hardship of the laws of inheritance, by which the widow was for a long time not recognised as an heir to her dead husband's immovable property, were considerably lessened by this habit of investing a great portion of the family savings in jewellery. Thus, Altekar has rightly remarked, "ornaments in fact were in the past what an insurance policy is in modern days. The large amounts invested in them have enabled thousands of Hindu women to tide over difficult times."[1]

Toilet and Articles of Toilet

Men sometimes used long hair and tied them with a hairband; and even the boys also do the same.[2] Women grew black long hair oiled and combed them, and then parted and knit them in long tresses.[3] They wore flowers, pearls and gems in their long hanging tresses, and on the parting line. Sometimes a net work of pearls were put on to cover the hair. They perfumed their hair with the incense of aguru, sandal, etc. Some of them tied their tresses (veṇīs) in one knot and put in on the crown of the head and it is called chuḍā (śikhā). They also used ekaveṇī with the help of a single knot.[4] The ladies and gents used flowers of an innumerable variety, garlands, perfumes, scented powders, incense, collyrium, sandal-wood paste, yellow pigment, realgar, orpiment, musk powder, unguent, saffron, lac-dye, lodhra-dust, lip-dye, red-dye, etc. as the articles of toilet.[5] They also used in different ceremonial occasions. For all these

[1]*The Position of Women in Hindu Civilisation*, p. 365.

[2]*Raghuvaṁśa*, II.8, III. 28; IV. 63; XI. 1, 42; XVI. 43, XVIII, 43, 71; *Vikramorvasiyam*, IV; V.

[3]*Raghuvaṁśa*, XIX. 12; *Ṛtusaṁhāra*, IV. 15; *Meghadūta*, 2, 8; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, p 250.

[4]*Raghuvaṁśa*, VI. 23; *Ṛtusaṁhāra*, I. 4; II. 21; V. 5; VI. 13; *Kumārasambhava*, VII. 14; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, VII. 21; *Meghadūta*, pp 2, 29.

[5]*Raghuvaṁśa*, III. 55; IV. 12; VI. 50, 60, 65; VII. 7, 8; IX. 29; XIV. 12, 14, 37; XVI. 15, 50; XVII. 22, 24, 26; XIX. 28, 30, *Ṛtusaṁhāra*, I, 2, 4, 5, 6; II. 12; IV. 2, 5, 12, 17; V. 5, 9, 12; VI, 5, 12, 13, 60; *Kumārasambhava*, I. 47; III. 30, 33, 38; 55; IV. 19; V. 35, 51, 55, 68; VII 9, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 22, 23, 26, 30, 36; VIII. 9, 11, 89; *Mālavikāgnimitra*, III. 5, 13, p. 50; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, VII. 32; pp. 73, 84, 129; *Vikramorvasiyam* ,IV. 16; p. 121; *Meghadūta*, pp. 2, 11.

purposes looking-glass was absolutely needed. But glass was not invented at that time; we are not sure what kind of metals were highly polished and used as mirrors. In the *Raghuvaṁśa*, however, there is a reference to a mirror made of gold. Such a mirror might have been used in the royal house, but the poorer section of society could not have such costly looking glasses. In the opinion of Gopinath Rao highly polished metal plates of various designs were used as mirrors in those days.[1]

Guests (Atithi)

The guests were treated with great care and affection in every family. When a guest arrived in a house, he was treated with great hospitality. Respected guests like sage, preceptor, priest, king and others were given the honour of gods; their feet were properly washed and then they were requested to grace a seat of cane-weed.[2] They were then entertained with auspicious offerings like rice, honey, durvā grass, etc. (arghya) by senior member of the house.[3] Moreover, old acquaintances, friends and relatives are treated with equal care, love and affection; and hospitality and modesty (vinaya) were always considered as a capital virtue.[4]

Household Objects

From our epigraphic and literary sources we can form an idea of different household objects, such as cot with suitable bed, bed-cover (white as a swan) and pillows.[5] The other useful articles were spitting pot, cradle (to lull the children), instruments for house-crafts, wooden stool (kurchasthānam) for keeping personal deity, couch, (metal) mirror, palm leaves and cloth for writing purposes, pestle for pounding corn and

[1] *Raghuvaṁśa*, XIV. 37; XVII. 26; XIX. 28, 30; *Kumārasambhava*, VII, 26; VIII. 11; Rao, T.A. Gopinath, *Element of Hindu Iconography*, I, pt. I, p. 12.

[2] *Kumārasmbhava*, VI. 53; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, p. 37.

[3] *Raghuvaṁśa*, V. 2; VII. 18; XI. 69; XIII. 66, 70; XIV. 82; *Kumārasambhava*, VI. 50; VII. 72, *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, III. 39; *Vikramorvasiyam*, p. 137.

[4] *Meghadūta*, p. 4; *Raghuvaṁśa*, III. 34.

[5] *Raghuvaṁśa*, III. 15; V. 65, 72; VI. 1, 3; *Kāmandakiya Nītisāra*, I. 4, 5; Yazdani, G., *Ajanta*, I, pl. V.

winnowing baskets to separate the husk from the grain.[1]

Several kinds of seats were used by them. The king used throne (Simhāsana) which was sometimes made of gold and set with jewels.[2] In the opinion of T. A. Gopinath Rao it was "a four-legged seat, circular or rectangular in shape and one hasta or cubit in height. The four legs of this seat are made up of four small lions."[3] Other seaters were bench (Mañcha), cane-stool (vetrāsana, Mohra), wooden seat (Bhadrapīṭha, Bharasa) and cane and wooden chair.[4] Umbrella (chhatra, Ātapātra) were also commonly used by them against sun-shine and rain.[5]

From the Bhita excavation near Allahabad, archaeologists have discovered a set of household objects such as, one standing female figure (family deity) of copper, one copper basin, three tripods, one shallow saucer of copper, a cup of copper, one circular lid of copper, one cooking pot (handi) of beaten copper and two bangles of copper.[6] Moreover, numerous specimens of earthen pots, beads, and terrocotta figures have been excavated from Rajghat, Ahichchhatra, Bhita and other sites. These pottery includes cooking vessels of different sizes, different types of bowls, jars of many sizes, used for various purposes, incense-burners, big and small jars (ghaṛa for storing water), a stand for a jar, a goblet, pot-lids, a miniature kamanḍalu with a curved handle on the top and a miniature bottle.[7] Many of these objects are decorated with various patterns, such as, rosetters, geometrical figures, bands of lotuses alternating with conches, running boar and elephant designs. They are in a variety of shapes, *viz.* round, ellipsoidal, flat bottomed, open

[1]*Kāmandakiya Nītisāra,* I, 4. 6; 1. 4. 9; *JNSI,* XXIII, 1961; Yazdani, *Ajanta,* pl. VI, VII, XII, XIII; *Raghuvaṁśa,* XIX. 37; XVII. I. A. 1930, p. 172

[2]*Raghuvaṁśa,* VI. 4, 6.

[3]Rao, T.A. Gopinath, *Elements of Hindu Iconography,* I, p. 21; also *Raghuvaṁśa,* VII. 28.

[4]*Raghuvaṁśa,* VI. 1, 3; XVII. 10, 21; *Kumārasambhava,* VI.53; VII. 72; *Mālavikāgnimitra,* p. 66; *Vikramorvasiyam,* p. 138; Rao, T.A. Gopinath, *Elements of Hindu Iconography,* I, pt. I, p. 20; *JNSI,* XXIII, 1961, pp. 174-283.

[5]*Ibid.*

[6]*ASIAR,* 1911-12, pp. 89-91.

[7]*ASIAR,* 1903-4 (Basarh); 1911-12 (Bhita); *Ancient India,* I, 1967. (Ahichchhatra, pp. 44-48.)

at the top and receding at the base. The form of the water-jars is that of a long-necked bottle with a bulging belly usually finished in red polish and furnished with an attractive animal spout. Some of the drinking vessels show striking examples of handles. This shows that ornamental pottery was in very great demand in the market.

Amusements and Sports

The high standard of music both in theory and practice has been vividly expressed by Kālidāsa in his *Mālavikāgnimitra.*[1] Some of the Gupta monarchs, such as Samudragupta and Kumāragupta I were specially devoted to instrumental music. On their Lyrist type of gold coins, the lyre (vīṇā) has been placed on their lap. The left hand usually keeps the instrument in position, while the right one is busy with the strings. Some coins depict the king as sitting with the instrument, and not playing on it. Other coins depict him as actually playing on the instrument with right hand fingers. The position of Samudragupta's fingers on certain coins shows his high skill in playing lyre (vīṇāvādana).[2] It also finds corroboration from his Allahabad stone pillar inscription which states that he (Samudragupta) put to shame the heavenly musician Tumburu and Nārada by his lovely performances of music.[3] Again, Bhitari pillar inscription indicates that Skandagupta could understand musical keys.[4]

As depicted in the *Meghadūta*, the wife of Yaksha is a skilful musician, the lute being her favourite instrument. She also composes song in which her husband's name is clearly introduced.[5] Besides, singing and dancing Mālavikā is an expert flute and lute player. Haṁsapadikā sings an enchanting song like Mālavikā, though the latter does so in the accompaniment of her excellent dancing.[6] The rich people used to engage music teachers to educate their children. Irāvatī and Mālavikā received training from Haradāsa and Gaṇadāsa.[7] In addition to the

[1]Acts I and II.
[2]Allan, *BMCGD*; Altekar, *Coinage*.
[3]Fleet, *CII*, III, no. 1, p. 8.
[4]*Ibid.*, no. 13, p. 55.
[5]*Meghadūta*, II. 24, 25.
[6]*Mālavikāgnimitra*, II, 13; also *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, V. 17.
[7]*Mālavikāgnimitra*, I, 74.

music of the lute and flute, that of mriḍaṅga, muraja and pakhāwaj were also used.[1]

A dramatic performance was a common feature on festive occasions, like marriages, spring-festivals and other occasions,[2] and the ladies also took special interest in acting. Thus, Urvaśī acted as Lakshmī and Menakā as Vāruṇī in the drama of *Lakshmī-Svayaṁvara*; similarly a female dancer (Naṭī) played her part well in the opening scene of the *Śakuntalā*.[3] Bharata had given a scientific exposition of the dramatic art in his famous work, *Nāṭyaśāstra*,[4] which was certainly popular in the Classical age, for Kālidāsa states, "The lord of the gods, with the guardians of the quarters, if desirous of seeing to-day the dramatic performance taught to you by the sage Bharata, which is the substratum of the eight sentiments, and wherein there is charming acting." Thus, from the above account it can be said that music, dancing and acting were quite popular in the society.

Painting was another popular pursuit of the day and many of the fashionable kings used to maintain portrait-galleries in their places.[5] The wife of a Yaksha was a very good painter; similarly Dushmanta was a skilful painter.[6] Even some of his female attendents were very good at painting and they were engaged by his brother-in-law, Mitrāvasu to decorate his pleasure garden by painting.[7]

There were various ways of merry making in the Classical age. The spring festival (Vasantotsava), which was a fit occasion for starting various plays, also witnessed the merriments of the intoxicated people all around. During the pleasure baths in the public tanks women enjoyed considerable pleasure; and the joyous ladies were also accustomed to pluck flowers and utilized them in abundance in their toilet. Another popular amusement in some festivity was the sprinkling of colour water.[8] Swings (dola)

[1] *Raghuvaṁśa*, XVI, 13, 14; *Meghadūta*, II. 1.
[2] *Kumārasambhava*, VII. 90, 91; *Malāvikāgnimitra*, (prelude), I. 28.
[3] *Vikrāmorvasiyam*, III. 6; *Abhijñānaśākuntala* (prelude).
[4] *Raghuvaṁśa*, XIX. 35.
[5] *Meghadūta*, II. 24, 25; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, VI.
[6] *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, VI. 19.
[7] *Raghuvaṁśa*, XVI. 64, 70; XIX. 5, 23.
[8] *Raghuvaṁśa*, XI. 46; XIX. 44; *Mālavikāgnimitra*, pp. 39, 41, 47-49.

were another source of enjoyment. Dice was, perhaps, a popular game among the aged people; and the boys and girls were interested in balls.[1]

The hunting was another pastime for the richer section of the society. The fondness of the Gupta kings for hunting is depicted on their numerous coin types. The learned authors of past have described several advantages of hunting (mrigaya). According to Kāmandaka it was a very good "exercise, the disappearance of phlegm, bile, fat and sweat, the acquisition of skill in aiming at stationary and moving bodies, the ascertainment of the minds of beasts, when they are provoked, and occasional travel."[2] Kālidāsa dwells upon the merits of hunting almost in the same words.[3]

The coins of hunting series reveal that the game was played from horseback, from elephant's back and on foot. Hunting from the horse back is to be found depicted on the coins of Kumāragupta I (Rhinocero-slayer type) and Prakāsaditya (Horse-rider-lion-slayer type). Besides, rhinoceroses and lions, the kings shot down antelopes, deers, bisons, yaks and so on. On some coin types the king is attacking the beast with a sword which was obviously the most convenient weapon, when the animal was close up. The hunters were equipped with bow also which must have been used, when the beast was at some distance.[4]

Elephant riding was another outdoor sport favourite to the kings. It has been depicted on some rare coins of Kumāragupta I (Elephant rider type). The coins also indicate the royal love of birds. The peacock type of coins of Kumāragupta I is depicted in feeding grapes to a peacock or pointing out something to the bird.[5]

Social Divisions

The most important features of ancient Indian life is the caste system. According to G.S. Ghurye, "Castes are small and

[1]*Raghuvaṁśa*, VI. 18; XVI. p. 13; *Kumārasambhava*, I, 29; *Mālavikāgnimitra*, 85.

[2]*Kāmāndakiya Nītisāra*, XIV. 25; *Arthaśāstra of Kautilya*, VIII. 3.

[3]*Abhijñānaśākuntala*, II, 5 pp. 19-20; *Raghuvaṁśa*, IX. 49.

[4]Allan, *BMCGD*; Smith, *Catalogue of the Coins in the Indian Museum.* III, 82.

[5]*Vikramorvaśiyīm*, II. 17.

complete social worlds in themselves, marked off definitely from one another, though subsisting with the larger society."[1] But the original meaning of the term 'caste' comes from the Latin word, castus (pure) and is used popularly by the Portuguese to denote the Indian social divisions. Thus, the term caste has not a much later origin; it is, however, technically used to denote Jāti (popularly known as caste). Etymologically Jāti comes from the root Jān meaning to take birth; hence, it is the birth-determined social group; and in the opinion of N. K. Dutt birth determines a man's caste for life, unless he is expelled for violation of its rules.[2] The spirit behind the Indian caste system is mutual obligation; each and every one should remain fully satisfied with his special position in society.[3]

Manu, however, traces the divine origin of the caste system and the four principal caste, such as, Brāhmaṇas, Kṣhatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras come out of the mouth, arms, thighs and feet of Brahmā respectively.[4] Again, he states that the Śūdras are said to have been created by God to serve the Brāhmaṇas.[5] Thus, the division of society into four groups is made of God and as such it is divine. But the modern scholars like Basham, Senart and others have not accepted this theory. Basham is of opinion that, "the caste system may well be the natural response of the many small and primitive people who were forced to come to terms with a more complex economic and social system."[6] Senart supplements it further, "the caste is the normal development of ancient Indian institutions, which assumes a peculiar form because of the peculiar condition in India."[7] Some one has explained it that the occupation is the sole basis of caste and he excludes all influence of race and religion for the origin and growth of this system.

However, in India caste system has derived certain benefit in society. According to Sidney Low, it is the "main cause of the fundamental stability and contentment by which Indian society

[1]Ghurye, G.S., *Caste and Race in India*, p. 6.
[2]Dutt, N. K., *Origin and Growth of Caste in India*, p. 3.
[3]Ray, D.N., *The Spirit of Indian Civilization*, p. 104.
[4]*Manusmṛti*, I. 31.
[5]*Ibid*, VIII. 413.
[6]*The Wonder that was India*, p. 149.
[7]*Origin and Growth of Caste in India*, p. 17.

has been traced up for centuries against the shocks of politics and cataclysus of nature. It provides every man with his place, his carrier, his occupation, his circle of friends."[1] Meredith Townsend, again, thinks that it is a "marvellous discovery, a form of socialism which through ages protected Hindu society from anarchy and from the worst evils of industrial and competitive life."[2] Thus, from the above, it cannot be said that the early Indian caste system has successfully maintained the fundamental stability of the social frame-work and the security of Hinduism from the evils of later industrialization, and foreign invasion and contacts.

Brāhmaṇas

In antiquity India was popularly known as Brahmarāṣṭra, that is, the land of the Brāhmaṅas and their pre-dominance in early Indian society was fully recognised.[3] For the religious merit of the donor and his family, the kings, queens, officials and others had lavishly donated money and lands to the Brāhmaṇas and they became ultimately very rich by receiving gifts.[4] Again, for religious aims, even the ladies were anxious to donate one thousand cows to the Brāhmaṇas.[5]

The origin of the term Brāhmaṇas has certain religious significance and it is originated from the term 'Brahma' which signifies prayer or hymn[6] and Brāhmaṇa is expected to compose and recite prayer (or hymn). Keeping this idea in view Manu enumerates the duty of a Brāhmaṇa. His duty is to teach, study, perform sacrifice, conduct sacrificial performance and to receive gifts;[7] and their duties are thus to preserve the Vedas, to satisfy the gods and to safeguard religion (Dharma).[8] "Often the Brahmaṇa lived under the patronage of a king or chief, and was provided for by grants of tax-free land, farmed by peasants, who

[1] *Vision of India.*
[2] Quoted by Kane, *HDS*, II, pt. I.
[3] I-Tsing, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practised in India and the Malay Archipelego*, translated by J. Takakusu, p. 118.
[4] Maity, *ELGP* (New ed.), pp. 61-67.
[5] Chakladar, *SLAI*, p. 100.
[6] Kane, *HDS*, II, pt. I, p. 30.
[7] *Manusmṛti*, I. 88.
[8] *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, I. 198, Quoted, Kane, *HDS*, II, pt. I, pp. 107-08.

would pay their taxes to the Brāhmaṇa instead of to the king; but there were also land owning Brāhmaṇas, who cultivated large estates by hired labour or serfs. The religious Brāhmaṇa might have a high post in court", and the chief priest (Purohita) sometime acted as the principal adviser of the king.[1]

At least in the early society "many Brāhmaṇas led truly religious lives. Kālidāsa's *Śakuntalā* gives a charming picture of a settlement of such pious Brāhmaṇas, living simply but not too austerely in huts in the forest, where even the wild deer were unafraid of the gentle hermits, and the woodland was for ever perfumed with the fragrance of their sacred fires. Such Brāhmaṇa colonies were supported by the gifts of kings and chiefs and of the peasants of the neighbourhood. Other Brāhmaṇas became solitary ascetic, while in the Middle Ages Brāhmaṇa monastic orders were founded rather on the Buddhist model."[2]

Thus, in this age of Brāhmaṇical revivalism the Brāhmaṇa of higher status enjoy a life of ease and prosperity by the frequent gifts made by the religious minded people. The poor and degraded Brāhmaṇas had to accept different vocations. Kumārāmātya Prithivīsena, the grandson of Vishnupalitabhaṭṭa was appointed as the Commander-in-Chief (Mahābalādhikrita);[3] some were forced to accept the profession of the Vaiśyas[4] and even lower than that.

The Brāhmaṇa as a class enjoyed many special privileges; while sanctioning this privilege, the early thinkers probably had in mind the superiority of profession and duty of the Brāhmaṇas to those of the Kshatriyas. It is also said that the king is the ruler of all except the Brāhmaṇas. For committing grave offences one, except a Brāhmaṇa, is liable to undergo capital punishment.[5] Even in the battle-field it is forbidden to kill a Brāhmaṇa; it is, however, certain that when a Brāhmaṇa assumes the role of a warrior, he cannot be immune from death. They also enjoyed

[1]Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, pp. 100, 139. The term *Purohita* means who does welfare of the *Pura* or villages. Myself belongs to one Pura (that is, my native village is Iswarpura) and now a days a *Purohita* is considered to be a family priest in Indian villages.

[2]*Ibid.*

[3]*EI*, X, pp. 71-72; Sircar, *Select Ins.*, pp. 282-83.

[4]*Mrichchhakāṭika* (Refer Charūdatta).

[5]*Nāradasmṛti*, I. 153.

special status in society; they had even easy access to the royal harem, the doors of which were bolted against the visitors of other castes there. They could even talk to the royal ladies sitting behind a curtain.[1] They had, on the other hand, certain obligation to their fellow-beings. By no means they should be selfish and were supposed to aid and advise the people of other castes in their society.[2]

Kshatriyas

Next to the Brāhmaṇa the second group of the Dvijas (twice-born) was the Kshatriyas. In the Vedic period they were known as Rājanyas (or rulers) and later on called as the Kshatriyas; this term is further explained by the later law-givers Śukra. It is said that men who can protect men, who are valorous, restrained and powerful and who is expected to punish the wicked, is called Kshatriya.[3] And we can go back to the old proposition that the Kshatriyas are created from the hands of the Great Being and thus, with the help of their arms the Kshatriyas are expected to protect the life and property of their subjects from all kinds of evils and to punish the wicked.[4]

The first duty of a Kshatriya boy is to receive proper training in the use of arms; and his next duty is to learn the art of administration, for it is the most important duty of the king to administer his kingdom properly.[5] Moreover, he must be very careful to protect the Vārṇa and āśramadharma within his country.[6] In return the king can enjoy certain privileges. The early law-giver Gautama lays down that the taxes are to be paid in return for the protection given by the king.[7] According to Nārada the royal revenue is the reward of the king for the protection of his subjects.[8] The king has, thus, the right of taxation. But he should not impose oppressive taxes, lest he

[1]*Kāmandakiya Nītisāra*, 5. VI. 41.
[2]Chakladar, *SLAI*, p. 100.
[3]*Śukrā-Nītisāra*, I. 81-82.
[4]*Ibid.*
[5]*Viṣṇusmṛti*, II. 4.; II. 5.
[6]*Ibid*, III. 2; *Nāradasmṛti*, XVIII, 14; Sircar, *Select Ins.*, p. 375.
[7]*Gautamā Dharmāśastra*, X. 28.
[8]*Nāradasmṛti*, XVIII. 48.

destroyed the tree which gives the golden apples.[1]

They also enjoyed several privileges in society and like the Brāhmaṇa they are the Dvijas (twice-born) and had to undergo Upanayana ceremony. They were allowed to read Vedas; but were not entitled to teach it.[2] The marriage rules and their practices were not so rigid for the Kshatriyas as for the Brāhmaṇas and the law-givers were compelled to accept them. The birth of Lord Buddha among the Kshatriyas and his preaching might have improved the position of their class in society; and the kshatriyas took the position of rulers over the major parts of India had certainly established their superiority over the Brāhmaṇas at the early sociey. By way of explaining the position of the Kshatriyas, A. L. Basham has rightly remarked, "A strong king was always a check on brāhmaṇic pretensions, just as the brāhmaṇas were a check on the pretensions of the king. Tradition speaks of many anti-brāhmaṇical kings who came to evil ends, and the legend of Paraśurāma, who destroyed the whole Kshatriya class for its impiety, must contain a recollection of fierce strife between the two classes in pre-Buddhist times. After the Mauryan period the Brāhmaṇas theoretical position was established throughout most of India, but the Kshatriyas were in fact still often their equal or superior."[3]

Vaiśya

Vaiśyas are the twice-born (Dvijas) as they have to perform all the rites (Saṁskāras) from the conception to the funeral with the utterances of incantations (Mantras). Regarding them Kāmandaka says that the means of subsistence of a Vaiśya are cattle-rearing, cultivation and trade and that the occupation of those who live by these means is called Vārta.[4] Kālidāsa includes cultivation, animal husbandry etc. within it, and in the later period Śukra included usury, agriculture, commerce and cattle-breeding as a means of their livelihood.[5] Thus, in broad sense, "the ideal Vaiśya has expert knowledge of jewels, metals, cloths, threads, spices, perfumes and all manner of merchandise

[1]Refer *Kāmandakiya Nītisāra*, V. 84, p. 29.
[2]*Manusmṛti*, X.I.; *Raghuvaṁśa*, XI. 64.
[3]*The Wonder that was India*, p. 141.
[4]*Kāmandakiya Nītisāra*, II. 14, 20; also *Manusmṛti*, IX. 326 ff.
[5]*Raghuvaṁśa*, XVI. 2; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, I. 311-12.

—he is, in fact, the ancient Indian businessman.[1]

In such an age of the economic prosperity, as was in the time of the Guptas, the importance of the Vaiśyas in society increased rapidly; and they are respectable Śreshthis, Śārthavāhas and Vanijas.[2] The Śreshṭhi (or Nagara-Śreshṭhi) and Sārthavāha are very different in their individual capacity. The term Śreshṭhi[3] in Sanskrit means no more or less than Śeṭh in Bengali or Hindi, a merchant. Sometimes by virtue of his wealth and influence he might be the chief of the trading community in a city. Thus, his wealth, popularity and influence over his own community and the people at large were the reasons for his selection as one of the important members of the two administration (adhikaraṇa). Besides their own business, these Śreshṭhin were money-lenders or bankers. Even today a class of very wealthy merchants is known as Śeth (Sanskrit Śreshṭhin) in India. From the *Mudrārākshasa*, we know the Chāṇakya appointed Chandanadāsa as the merchant-in-chief in all the cities of the kingdom;[4] and he probably corresponded to the nagara-śreshṭhin of our inscriptions.

Roads were sometimes dangerous for the caravan merchants (Sārthavāha), for many of the routes lining the civilised towns passed through dense forests and hills infested with robbers, wild tribes and wild animals. For this reason the traders preferred to share their peril together, and they formed themselves into large bands under the guidance of a caravan merchant (Sārthavāha). Thus in the *Mālavikāgnimitram*, Kāliḍāsa gives a pathetic description of a group of merchants with such a caravan leader. A large group of traders was going to Vidiśā from Vidarbha. After the day's journey they encamped in a forest. Suddenly they were attacked by a gang of robbers and all their wares were taken away by the robbers.[5]

The Vaiśyas also served in the capacity of soldiers. The Gupta state had to maintain a very good standing army which had proved their efficiency in the numerous successful warfares

[1]*The Wonder that was India*, p. 142.

[2]*EI*, XV, pt. I, p. 130; pt. 2. p. 133; *Mālavikagnimitra*, I. 17, p. 98; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, p. 219.

[3]*EI*, XV, pt. 1 and 2, pp. 130, 133; XX. p. 61.

[4]Maity, *ELGP* (New. ed.), pp. 159, fn. 5.

[5]VII. p. 211.

all over India. It was, thus, very difficult to get a vast standing army only from the *Kshatriyas*; the Vaiśyas and Śūdras were certainly included in it. As a matter of fact, in no period of ancient Indian history were the Kshatriyas sole constituents of the army.[1]

Śūdra

The Brāhmaṇical traditions are preserved in the Purāṇas which determined the position of the Śūdras in the following way. It is said that "those who grieved and run, and were addicted to manual tastes, and were inglorious and feeble, were made Śūdras."[2] This explains the position of the Śūdras in the early Indian society. Again, in the Buddhist tradition, those who were of dreadful and mean conduct, came to be known as the Śūdras.[3] In the Buddhist lexicon of the early mediaeval times Śūdra became a synonym of Kshudra which means an inferior ones.[4] Thus, both these traditions refer to the mean origin and inferior status of the Śūdra Varṇa in society. Their origin is further suggested by Roth who suggests that they might have been outside the pale of the Arya society,[5] and they are the Dāsas (or Dasyus) of our Vedic literature; again by the Ṛg Vedic hymns Indra is requested to overthrow the Dāsa tribes (visas). As a result Indra has subjugated them and deprived them from all good qualities.[6]

The Anuśāsana Parvan, however, holds that they are veritable workers[7] and they are supposed to serve the people of the upper three classes by their manual labour. But in the Classical age they took to different professions; such as, Mālākara (garland maker), Gandhika (perfumer), Rājakas (washerman), Nāpita (barber),

[1]Act, V, p. 1112 (Bengali tr.); also vide Legge, *Record of the Buddhistic Kingdoms*, p. 97.

[2]*Vayupurāna*; I. VIII. 158; *Bhaviṣyapurāna*, I. 44, 23 ff.

[3]*Digha Nikāya*, III. 95.

[4]S. V. Sudra; *IA*, II, pp. 138-9.

[5]*ZDMG*, I. 84.

[6]*RV*, 1.ii. 265, 388; Dutt, R.C., *A History of Civilization in Ancient India*, I, p. 12; Senart, Emile, *Caste in India*, p. 83; Dutt, *Origin and Growth of Caste in India*, pp. 151-52; Ghurye, *Caste and Class in India*, pp. 151-52; Bhandarkar, D.R., *Some Aspects of Ancient Indian Culture*, p. 10, *RV*.11. 4; 12.4; 13.8; IV. 28,4; 36.6; VI.I. 358; 25.2; X. 148.2, *AV*, XX. 34.4.

[7]*The Mahābhārata*, Anuśasana Parva (Critical edition), pp. 33-44, 208.

Śauṇḍika (wine merchant), Tāmbulika (betel leaves seller), Suvarṇika (goldsmith), Manikāra (jeweller), Vaikālika (Diamond cutter), Kushīlava (actor), Gāyana (singer), and thus, they are all wage-earners and all are referred to in the Śūdravarga of the *Amarakośa*.[1]

They were also engaged as the domestic servants and received food and clothing and wages.[2] They also took the profession of the agriculturists and received half the crop of the land from the owner,[3] and this was received on the share-cropping basis. Sometimes, they used to receive one-tenth of the crop-production as their wages[4] and in difficult economic situation they also took the profession of a trader.[5]

The Hindu Śāstrakāras also imposed numerous restrictions on their social behaviour. According to Bṛhaspati, if they "teach the precepts of religion or utter the words of the Vedas, they are punished by the cutting off of his tongue."[6] Again, they should not read or teach and if it is violated they should be severely punished.[7] The same view is maintained in the *Mrichchhakaṭika* of Śūdraka.[8]

Their close participation in different economic pursuits gradually enhanced their position in society. They also discharged important functions in the civic administration of the city. Prathama-Kulika are very often recorded in our epigraphic records along with Prathama-Kāyastha, Nagara-Śreshṭhi and Sārthavāha.[9] The Kāyasthas (artisans) are included in the Śūdravarga of the *Amarakośa*,[10] Dikshitar accepts them as artisans.[11] There are also references of the Śūdra-kings of Saurashṭra, Avanti, Arbuda, Malwa, Sindhu and Kashmir.[12] They are

[1]*Kāmasūtra*, IV. I.9; V.ii.12; *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, I. 169; *Amarkośa*, 11.10, 38-39, Sharma, R.S., *Śūdras in Ancient India*, p. 224.

[2]*Kāmandakiya Nītisāra*, III.i.33, 42.

[3]*Manusmṛti*, IV. 253; *Viṣṇusmṛti*, LVII. 16; *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, I. 166.

[4]*Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, 11.194; *Nārdasmṛti*, VI. 2-3.

[5]*Manusmṛti*, IV. 120.

[6]*Bṛhaspatismṛti*, XX. 18.

[7]*Manusmṛti*, X. 1.

[8]IX. 21.

[9]*EI*, XV, p. 130, pls. 5; XX. p. 61; XXI, p. 81; *IA*, 1910, XXXIX.

[10]*Amarkośa*, 11.10.5.

[11]*Gupta Polity*, p. 257.

[12]Sharma, *Śūdras in Ancient India*, p. 241; Pargiter, *DKA*, p. 55.

sometimes even acted as ministers and spies.[1]

The influence of Buddhism had to a certain extent relaxed the rigours of the caste system. Numerous monasteries and pagodas were constructed with the help of royal and other patronages and irrespective of sex, castes, and nationality all were accepted into the new religious fold. Moreover, this period witnessed momentous changes in the status of the Śūdras. Not only was there an increase in the rates of wages paid to hired labours, artisans and pedlars, but slaves and hired labourers were gradually becoming share-croppers and peasants.[2]

Untouchables

Below the rank of the Śūdras there were many outcastes and untouchables in society and they were mostly non-Āryan in origin. The chief among them were the Chaṇḍālas. They had to perform the duties of hangman and to burn the dead bodies of others, and they could use the clothes, beds, jewelleries of the corpse.[3] But by the time of the Guptas, their number must have increased rapidly and they could not maintain themselves only by the above means. The *Dharmapada Commentary* refers to the thousand families of Chaṇḍālas who lived near the gate of the city of Savatthi (Śrāvasthī) and they lived by hired labour.[4]

The Chaṇḍālas had to live outside the city gate on village and by Gupta times they had become so strictly untouchable that they were forced to strike a wooden clapper on entering a town, to warn the Āryans of their polluting approach.[5] Again, Fa-hien states that "throughout the whole country people do not kill any living creature, nor drink intoxicating liquor nor eat onions, or garlic. The only exception is that of the Chaṇḍālas."[6] It is, thus, clear from the above that they used to kill living creatures as a means of their livelihood. There were also other untouchables, such as *Nishāda* (hunter), *Kaivarta* (fisherman), *Kārāvara* (Chamār, leather worker), *Paulkasa* (sweeper), *Veṇa* (basket maker), *Rathakāra* (chariot-maker) and the *Mlechchhas* (non-

[1]*Kāmandaka*, XII, 44, 45.
[2]Maity, *ELGP.*
[3]*Manusmṛti*, X. 56, 39.
[4]*DC*, 5.3 29, 115.
[5]Legge, *Record of the Buddhistic Kingdoms*, p. 43.
[6]*Ib d.*

Indian).[1] Moreover, outside the pale of the Indo-Aryan society there lived a lot of aboriginal people known as, Pulindas, Śabaras, Kikatas, and others and they lived in the hilly regions of India. They had altogether different customs, habits, religious and social practices.

[1] *The Wonder that was India*, p. 145.

CHAPTER V

ECONOMIC LIFE

The literary, artistic and political splendour of Indian culture under the Imperial Guptas has often led historians to pay scant attention to the economic life of this period. But the high cultural attainments of this period would have been impossible without a prosperous economy. Scholars like Majumdar, Mookerji, Rhys David, Bose and others have written on this subject. But their accounts are neither based on all the available literary sources nor do they utilize two very important sources of information, namely, epigraphic and numismatic. The source materials for our purpose are very fragmentary and scattered in character. Only a very painstaking and meticulous study of all these can give us a broad idea of the subject and certain distinct characteristics of the economic life of the Gupta period which emerged gradually.

As land was the most important source of wealth at this time, the land system engages our attention in the first place. In early India the ownership of land may well have been determined by the squatter's right. But this principle could not provide a legal enough basis in a highly evolved society at a time when settled agricultural life was rapidly advancing. Consequently rules were framed by law-givers like Nārada and Bṛhaspati for legal ownership of land. The existence of such rules presupposes the existence of a powerful body-politic that could enforce the rules. Such a strong government was provided by the two hundred years of continuous Gupta rule. And since in the final analysis it was the king who protected the individual ownership of land, he came to be naturally and increasingly looked upon as the ultimate lord of the soil. The individual enjoyed his land so long as he paid taxes to the king.

Historians like Basak, Majumdar, Altekar and Jayaswal have argued that ultimate ownership of land was vested in the village community or in the private individual. But there is overwhelming epigraphic evidence contrary to their views. A large number of Gupta inscriptions record the endowment of whole village or part thereof for religious or charitable purposes. After such donations, the villagers were required to pay their taxes to the donee instead of to the king. Such endowments with such instructions would have been impossible, had the king not been regarded as the ultimate owner of all land. The idea of the ultimate royal ownership of land is also substantiated by the law givers like Manu, Gautama and Bṛhaspati. Moreover, the king directly owned mines and large tracts of cultivable and uncultivable fields. One sometimes comes across references to the sale of state lands.

There were different types of land like *Kshetra* (cultivable land), *khila* (fallow), *aprahata* (hitherto untilled land), *apradā* (unsettled land), *vāstu* (house site), and *gopatha-sarah* (pasture land). There was probably a considerable demand for all types of land which was manifested in the great care that was taken in surveying and delimiting lands. Although no detailed table of measurements of the Gupta period is available, we come across the mention of such units as *aṅgula*, *hasta*, *dhanu* or *daṇḍa*, and *nala*. In spite of the controversies regarding the interpretation of such terms, there can be no doubt that they were widely used. In demarcating the boundaries of a piece of land, various boundary marks were traditionally used like well, tanks, trees, pools, stones, potsherds and even the names and occupations of the owners of the adjoining lands. Quite frequently in a boundary dispute, the final decision rested with the neighbours, members of the same village of community, and senior people of the area.

An elaborate revenue system had emerged in ancient India even before the Guptas. Hindu law-givers justified the king's right to the taxes in return for the protection he provided for his subjects. But they were careful to point out that the king should neither be extortionate in collecting revenue nor be extravagant in his expenditure. The idea was perhaps to maintain a viable balance between a prosperous people unburdened by heavy taxation and strong treasury. It is likely that the Guptas had a rich treasury without which their wide military

campaigns, particularly those of Samudragupta, would not have been possible.

Land was by far the most important of all the sources of revenue. Generally speaking, the king claimed one-sixth of the produce of the land. His right in this respect was so widely accepted that we find in Kālidāsa that he was even entitled to a sixth of the earnings of hermitages in return for the protection he gave them. Since this tax was a sixth of the produce, in all likelihood its amount was not absolutely fixed but varied with the rise and fall in production. In contemporary epigraphic and literary sources, we find references to various other taxes such as *kara, bali, hiraṇya, udraṅga, uparikara* and others. No consensus of opinion exists about the interpretation of these terms. *Kara* was apparently unknown in the early Vedic period, but it is frequently mentioned in the literature of later times. It was perhaps not a regular annual land tax but a special tax levied periodically on the villagers. *Bali*—the oldest Indo-Āryan term for royal revenue—was perhaps originally a voluntary payment to the king. But since no state can exist on the basis of voluntary payments, it possibly became a compulsory tax in later times. In the Gupta period, it was possibly a religious tax, since it is always mentioned in the contemporary literature along with *charu* and *sattra*—both the terms being of religious import. Hiraṇya should perhaps mean in its literal sense a tax payable in gold coins. But since the ordinary peasantry was unlikely to pay a tax in gold, hiraṇya most probably meant a tax in cash. Forced labour on royal land was another form of taxation. Although it is not precisely known whether the taxes sat heavily on the people, there is little doubt that the *chāṭas* and *bhāṭas*—the state employees who were engaged in the collection of revenue and maintenance of law and order—were often guilty of extortion and even levying illegal dues.

Taxation has been rather heavy in periods of Indian history and there were other taxes besides the land tax. Megasthenes and *Arthaśāstra* indicate that in the Maurya period the share in the produce of land was $\frac{1}{4}$ or more. From the account of Fa-hien and the general impression given by our inadequate sources, it would seem that in Gupta times the royal share was perhaps as much in spite of the law-givers' injunctions in favour of moderate taxation. The total tax burden, including the basic

tax and other numerous extra dues, may well have sat heavily on the peasants.

An important source of revenue, unrelated to land, was the *śulka* which possibly comprised custom duties, ferry-duties and sales tax. The government had a regular department to collect the *śulka* and employed superintendents for the purpose called the *Saulkika*. Other sources of revenue were mines, deposits, treasure troves and fines imposed on offenders of the law.

Through millenia agriculture has been the mainstay of Indian economy and the Gupta age was no exception in this respect. Our sources of information yield copious references to agriculture and its every aspect A generous nature and establishment of the irrigation works greatly helped the expansion of agriculture. Besides the state and the individual cultivators, Brāhmaṇas and Buddhist and Jain Sanghas brought waste lands under cultivation, when these were donated to them as religious endowments. We find in Kālidāsa that even the hermits utilised lands for the purpose of agriculture and produced different kinds of corn for their own maintenance. In view of the importance of agriculture, Nārada and Bṛhaspati laid down rules for drastic punishment of those guilty of either damaging crops or stealing foodgrains. Even a herdsman was subject to punishment, if due to his negligence, cattle did any damage to the crops. At the same time the cultivator was asked to fence and protect his field properly.

In the Gupta period the agricultural holdings were possibly small and were cultivated by the owner and his family. But there were some large holdings, like the eleven *pāṭakas* of land mentioned in the Gunaigarh Plate where the owner hired labour for their cultivation or let out the land to share-croppers. Both Nārada and Bṛhaspati laid down certain rules to govern the relations between the land owner and the hired labour or share-cropper. These rules were essentially meant to safeguard the interests of both the parties concerned. Since agriculture in most of the areas heavily depended on rainfall, Varāhamihira's *Bṛhatsaṁhita* deals elaborately with meteorological observations to provide guidelines for cultivators. From him we gather that at least in some parts of India, there were three harvests in the Gupta period—the summer, autumn and spring crops. Various crops were cultivated during the period under study, namely,

rice, wheat, barley, peas, lentils, pulses, sugarcane and oil seeds; and we find frequent mention of these in Varāhamihira and *Amarkośa.* The southern part of India was famous for pepper and cardamom as we can infer it from Kālidāsa. There were also various fruits grown in different parts like the mango, palmyra, coconut, grape and bread fruit. Varāhamihira gives elaborate advice for the plantation of fruit trees.

Although we find numerous references to prosperous agriculture during the Gupta period, there are equally frequent references to droughts, floods, crop failures and famines.

The importance of irrigation to help agriculture was early recognised in India since not all the parts of India were liberally watered by rivers and rainfall. The north-western parts of India especially needed irrigation. This was done by various means. Canals were constructed to prevent inundation as well as to irrigate dry regions. Nārada classified dykes into two types—the *bandhya* which protected the field from floods and the *khaya* which served the purpose of irrigation. The canals which were meant to prevent inundation were also mentioned in the *Amarkośa* as *jalanirgamaḥ* (drains). Canals were constructed not only from rivers but also from tanks and lakes. The tanks were variously called, according to their sizes, as the *vāpi*, *taḍāga* and *dīrghikā*. Of the lakes, the most famous was the Sudarśana lake at the foot of the Girnar Hills. Wells were also used for irrigation of small plots of land. It appears from Bṛhaspati that fines were imposed on those who did any mischief to the irrigation works.

There were large forests in India at the time. Kālidāsa gives an elaborate account of forests and forest produce. They yielded timber for buildings, boats and ships, skins of various wild animals, musk, lac, yak-tail, and ivory. That the forests were considered as a source of considerable wealth is testified to by the appointment of a royal official as the superintendent of forests; he was called the *Gaulmika.*

Animals, both wild and domesticated, were another source of wealth. Wild animals were important not only because they could be sold profitably but also because of the high price fetched by their skins, tusks, horns and flesh. Cows were certainly the commonest and most important of all domestic animals, for they yielded various milk products which were widely in use at

this time for both daily consumption and religious purposes. Their dung and bones also were useful as fuel and fertilizer. Because of the great usefulness of the cow in the economy of the time, Nārada and Bṛhaspati laid down elaborate rules to maintain the respective interests of the cattle owner and the cowherd. Oxen were used for ploughing the fields and for transport. Carefully chosen bulls were often set at liberty for the purpose of selective breeding. Both *Matsya Purāṇa* and Varāhamihira gave advices on how to choose the best bulls. Owing to the manifold utility of cattle in the economy of the time, the cow had become a sacred animal in the Gupta period. Kālidāsa gives a detailed description in the *Raghuvaṁśa* of how the cow was carefully looked after and worshipped by king Dilipa and his queen. The slaughter of a cow was considered a great sin.

Elephants and horses were used for military purposes as well as for transport, hunting and riding. The best horses were probably available in the north-western part of India. Asses, mules, and camels were used as beasts of burden.

The influence of Buddhism and Jainism had possibly by this time introduced a feeling of general unwillingness to kill animals for food or sacrifice. But Fa-Hien's remark that throughout the country the people did not kill any living creature is to be accepted with reservation. His experience was almost entirely confined to the Buddhist section of the population. Those who followed the traditional Hindu ways were not always averse to killing animals for food as we can gather it from Kālidāsa and other contemporaries.

Although agriculture was predominant in the economy of this period, a great variety of industries were in a flourishing condition. Mines were certainly worked in the Gupta period as the *Amarakośa*, *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* and Kālidāsa mention the existence of mines. We have definite evidence that the mines of the Chotanagpur area were worked in the Kuśāṇa period; it is therefore likely that they were also worked in the Gupta period. The *Amarkośa* gives a comprehensive list of metals, including gold, silver, copper, iron, brass, lead, and tin. Of all the metals, iron was certainly the most useful, and the blacksmiths were only next to the peasants in importance in the rural community. They manufactured, as the literature of the period testifies, various domestic and agricultural implements, utensils and

weapons. The most eloquent evidence of the high stage of development which metallurgy attained in the Gupta period is the Meharauli iron pillar of king Chandra, usually identified as Chandragupta II. This huge monolith which has lasted through centuries without rusting is a monument to the genius of the iron-workers of ancient India.

While the blacksmiths catered to the needs of all sections of the society, the goldsmiths usually satisfied the demands of the rich. Contemporary statuary, and literature testify to the wide use of jewellery by the people of the time. Ornaments not only added to feminine beauty but were also a convenient means for women to save against possible misfortunes.

Gold, silver and copper were used for minting the wide variety of Gupta coins. Other metals like bronze and brass were also in use during our period. A significant achievement of the period in metal technology was the manufacture of seals and statues, particularly of the Buddha.

A very popular and widely prevalent form of industry was that of making pots, terracotta figure, seals and leads. The extant specimens reveal the high degree of skill and perfection reached in moulding and colouring them. While clay utensils were popular for daily domestic use, clay figures were in demand for both religious and secular purposes. This extensive use of clay was natural because of its easy availability. But there were also many masons and sculptors whose medium was stone. They worked on buildings, pillars, columns, and statues. Many beautiful Buddhist monasteries and Hindu temples were constructed. A few of them have survived the ravages of time and Muslim invasions in different parts of India.

Animal products like silk, wool, skins, ivory, bones, and feather were a source of industry for a considerable number of people. Silk and wool products and articles made of rare skin were normally used by the rich people. But cotton textiles were used by all classes of people. The art of dyeing and embroidery was highly developed along with silk, wool and cotton industry.

An indirect evidence is found of the advanced stage of arts and crafts in the Gupta period in the rules which the Smṛti writers laid down to govern the relations between the master and the apprentice. The arts and crafts must have evolved considerably before the need for such rules was felt. These rules

laid down certain rights and duties of both the parties concerned. What, however, appears to be a striking feature, was that the relationship was intimate and personal unlike the relation between the teacher and the student at a twentieth century technical school. Such a relationship had its own merits and defects.

A flourishing state of trade and commerce was a natural consequence of the industrial activity of the people. Since early times India had both internal and international trade. In international trade, the Gupta India enjoyed close contacts with Egypt, Greece, Rome, Persia, Arabia, Syria and Ceylon, and in the east with Cambodia, Siam, Sumatra, the Malay Archipelago and China.

While a market usually served a number of neighbouring villages, internal trade within the country led to the growth of a number of prominent towns which serves as entrepots of trade. While the traders were a separate class by themselves, we find reference to two distinctive types of these people—Śresṭhi and Sārthavāha. The Śresṭhi was usually settled at a particular place and enjoyed an eminent position, by virtue of his wealth and influence, in the commercial life and administration of the place. The Sārthavāha was a caravan trader who carried his merchandise to different places for profitable sale. And indeed he often sold his goods for three or four times their original price. Considering the risks involved on the trade route, this was perhaps not unreasonable. Like the Śresṭhi, the Sārthavāha also was an important figure in city life. While local trade was mostly confined to the articles of daily use, trade between the different parts of India was usually in valuable and luxury commodities like pepper, sandal wood, coral, musk, saffron, yak's tail, elephants, horses, gold, copper, iron and mica. Nārada and Bṛhaspati laid down many regulations to govern the trade practices of the time, particularly concerning the return of goods once sold, quality of the goods, and dishonest dealing in substandard and stolen goods. Dishonesty in trade was however not a rare phenomenon, inspite of such rules. The Gupta period differed from the Mauryan period in one important respect. Unlike the Mauryas, the Guptas did not perhaps try to fix the prices. Prices fluctuated according to supply and demand, and both prices and units of measurement varied from place to place. Uniformity of prices and measurements, which is a

common characteristic of a modern state, was rather conspicuous by its absence in the Gupta state.

While internal trade was mainly carried on by roads and rivers, international trade used both maritime and land routes. A sea voyage was however very risky at the time as we find it from a number of contemporary accounts. There were pirates, and submarine rocks. There was no mariner's compass to guide the seamen. Only the stars and planets guided them; consequently a bad weather and clouded sky could prove fatal. Also the overland routes, particularly the central Asian, were also full of perils. Yet such risks could not prevent the stout-hearted traders and Buddhist missionaries from using those routes. Those parts of India which were most famous for India's international commerce were Sindhu, Gujarat, Kalyana, Chaul or Chenwal near Bombay, Malabar, Mangalore, Salopatana, Nalapatanā, and Tamralipti.

The countries which enjoyed eminent positions in India's international commerce were Ceylon, China, the Byzantine empire, Persia and Arabia. Situated south of the Indian peninsula and in the midst of the Indian Ocean, Ceylon had close commercial relations with India. She received a wide variety of commodities from India like textile goods, spices, sandalwood, musk, castor oil, horses and elephants. These were again exported to other countries. India perhaps imported from Ceylon pearls and silver. Trade with China seems to have considerably increased in the Gupta period. China imported, as Chinese chronicles mention, precious gems, pearls, saffron and pepper from India. Perhaps the most important commodity imported by India from China was silk much of which was probably exported to the Middle East and Byzantine empire.

India had a large volume of international commerce with the Byzantine empire. This is obvious from the Byzantine gold coins discovered in southern eastern and western parts of India. In his law Digest Justinian gave a long list of imports many of which clearly stated to be Indian and a few others were in all likelihood of Indian origin. They included iron, ivory and cotton. Of these, spices and silk were the most important. The Persian traders used to make inordinate profits from the silk trade between India and Byzantine and Justinian tried in various ways to break the Persian monopoly in silk trade. Besides, India

had also trade contacts with Arabia, Persia, and perhaps Armenia.

The Guptas, by providing a long period of internal peace, on doubt actively helped the growth of foreign trade. The westward drive of Samudragupta, completed successfully by Chandragupta II, was largely inspired by the desire to occupy the coastal region of Saurashtra, which had grown rich from trade with the west. Also with China in the east, as we have seen, India had commercial relations, although perhaps not on the same scale as with countries in the west. And trade contacts with countries in South East Asia produced far reaching effects on the cultures of those countries.

Of the various forms of labour in our period, slavery was one. Like other ancient societies, Gupta India too had slaves. Nārada mentions as many as fifteen kinds of slavery like captives of war, children born to female slaves in the house of a master, slaves who mortgaged themselves to clear a debt, slaves for the sake of maintenance, voluntary enslavement for the freedom of another person, slaves won in gambling, self-sold slaves, enslavement for a stipulated period and enslavement for having sexual relations with a female slave. Rules of emancipation varied from one type of slaves to another, while a few could obtain it only by the grace of the master. Although the slave could be bought, loaned, sold or inherited as any property, the masters had no right over the lives of their slaves, nor were they allowed to abandon the slaves in old age.

Since a slave was no better than his master's chattel, he had few rights recognized by the law. He could not own any property and any transaction by him—not authorized by his master—was invalid. Although in the earlier period slaves were employed in important economic functions like agriculture, in the Gupta period they mostly rendered domestic service.

It is debatable whether the lot of Indian slave was better than that of his European counterpart. Scholars like Bose suggest that it was. What however seems more probable in such a comparison was that slaves in India were far less in number than those of the Roman empire. In our sources there are no references to large numbers of slaves being owned by a single individual, or to large scale slave markets or slave trade. Possibly ancient Indian economy relied more on hired or forced labour than on

slavery.

As regards hired labour, our information is inadequate and scrappy in the extreme. Whatever little information we gather gives the impression that they hardly lived above the poverty line. They were paid either in cash or in kind—usually food stuffs, or in both. Both Nārada and Bṛhaspati framed rules for paying wages to the hired workers, whether they were in domestic service, or worked in the fields, or were employed by traders and craftsmen. In certain respects they were perhaps worse off than slaves since the latter enjoyed a degree of economic security not available to the hired workers.

Numerous epigraphic records testify to the existence of forced labour in our period. Since it is frequently mentioned in the Gupta inscriptions along with taxes, the state seems to have looked upon it as a sort of taxation paid by the people. As most of the inscriptions referring to forced labour are from Madhya Pradesh and Kathiawar, it is likely that forced labour was particularly prevalent in those regions.

The crystallization of casteism which was based in most cases on distinct professions and vocations and the increasing economic activities led to the growth of numerous guilds and corporations during the Gupta period. The detailed treatment of these corporate bodies in *Nārada* and *Bṛhaspati* in contrast with the only very occasional mention of them in the earlier law books is a clear indication of their impressive growth in the Gupta period. This inference is also supported by the inscriptions and seals of the time. It would however be rather hazardous, in the present state of our information to agree with Dr. Bloch's opinion about the existence of something like a modern chamber of commerce at Pāṭaliputra.

Nārada and Bṛhaspati laid down elaborate rules to cover the organization and functions of these corporate bodies. The guild constitution was apparently embodied within a document and membership was possible on monetary deposits and written agreements. Violation of the agreement was punishable by confiscation of property and even banishment from the town.

The functions of these bodies were of both social and economic utility. Charitable and philanthropic work for the community was a recognised part of their functions. They often functioned as banks since they received monetary deposits from

the public which in all likelihood they invested in economic ventures since they paid regular interests on these deposits. They must have been highly reliable and durable since even some of the Gupta emperors deposited money with them to run charitable institutions out of the interests paid on the deposits. The sources of the guild fund apparently comprised the contributions of members, royal gifts, profits earned from their economic ventures, and fines imposed on those who violated the guild laws.

The administrative machinery of a guild consisted of a head and a few assistants. These executives were usually men of intelligence, honesty, skill and born in good families. They seem to have exercised considerable authority on the individual members of the guild and meted out punishments in various degrees to mischievous and rebel members. Usually the king was supported not to interfere with the rules of a guild. But royal interference was not unknown particularly in the case of an unjust treatment of a member at the hands of the guild officers. The king was also supposed to intervene in a quarrel between the head and his assistant officers, and in any effort on the part of the guild to cheat the state or to combine in a hostile fashion against the king. Thus the guilds normally enjoyed freedom to a considerable degree and the intervention of the state was allowed only on special occasions. This shows that not only the common people but also the state recognized the power and influence of the guilds.

Besides the guilds, there were other forms of corporate economic activity, especially partnerships. Both Bṛhaspati and Nārada laid down elaborate rules for the successful conduct of partnerships. These cover the duties of the partners, their contributions to the joint capital and their shares in the loss and profit of the joint ventures. It was also suggested that due precaution should be exercised in choosing the partners, particularly regarding their parentage, character, skill and intelligence. While the entire partnership was responsible for any venture of a single partner when authorized by the body he was responsible for any unauthorized action and was bound to compensate for any loss or fraud. Partnerships functioned not only in trade and commerce but also in agriculture and arts and crafts. And in the latter spheres, skill was important for gains, the share of

a partner depended not only on his share in the capital but also on his skill.

The discovery of as many as sixteen hoards of Gupta coins in different parts of India clearly prove that money had been recognized by the people of the time as the medium of exchange. While gold and silver coins were used in large transactions, copper coins and perhaps even cowries were used in small transactions of daily life. Besides their utility as media of exchange, the gold and silver coins were also hoarded to meet future emergencies like famines, droughts, wars and other unforeseen disasters.

It is difficult to establish conclusively who introduced the Gupta currency system. Since Chandragupta I was the first Imperial ruler of the dynasty, it was until recently believed that he was the originator of the Gupta currency system and that the Chandragupta-Kumāradevī type of gold coins were the earliest gold coins of the dynasty. But on a close comparative numismatic study of these coins and other types of gold coins of Samudragupta, Allan has suggested that it was Samudragupta who first issued Gupta coins, that his first gold coins were of the standard type and that later he issued the Chandragupta-Kumāradevī type of coins to commemorate his father's marriage with the Lichchhavi princess which had proved of great benefit to the Gupta dynasty. Yet Allan's view has been challenged by Altekar on a number of important grounds.

The minting of silver coins was first started in the reign of Chandragupta II and was continued by Kumāragupta I and Skandagupta. Along with gold and silver coins, copper coins also were used as a regular currency at least in the reigns of Chandragupta II and Kumāragupta I. Also copper coins were used in their reigns.

Closely associated with money was money lending. Money lending on regular interests was one of the recognized professions, although wealth acquired thereby did not earn any social prestige. Nevertheless, Nārada and Bṛhaspati laid down rules for the conduct of this business and pointed out the legal, moral, and economic justification of interest. The state had apparently little responsibility concerning the contract between a lender and a borrower, and perhaps intervened only in extreme cases of usury. Almost virtual absence of state control might well have

led to great distress to the borrower in many cases.

Individuals, guilds and other corporate bodies were to be found in this business. In contracting loans, fixing the rates of interest, and recovering the loans, they framed their own rules, although in this respect they seem to have been largely guided by local customs. Nārada and Bṛhaspati laid down rules regarding the security, guarantor and validity, and utility of loan documents. The normal rate of interest according to them was as high as 15 per cent per annum. It is interesting to note that the rates of interest possibly varied from one caste to another, the lowest being paid by the Brāhmaṇas. The obligation to repay a loan was inherited by the son or any legal heirs of a debtor. Our law-givers were, however, not content with imposing legal obligations; these were reinforced with reference to moral obligations. Possibly the latter based on the threat of serious consequences of non-payment in the hereafter carried considerable weight in a society which was heavily under the influence of religion.

The above brief survey of the economic life of our period shows the flourishing condition of agriculture, industry, arts and crafts during the time. The State possibly enjoyed an efficient and centralized administration which would not have been possible without a rich treasury and it was that administration which, by securing continuous peace for a long time, ensured the growth of agriculture, industry, trade and commerce. The high noon of ancient Indian civilization during the Gupta period was a direct consequence of this economic prosperity. Yet it would be wrong to assume that this prosperity was shared by all classes of people. Just beneath the thin crust of cultural brilliance and material prosperity, there was poverty of a *large section* of the people.

CHAPTER VI

RELIGION

Most of the beliefs and superstitions, philosophy and rational speculations of earlier times survived along with their religious and social institutions. The people in the Classical age were on the whole deeply religious and god-fearing in nature. Temples of the Hindu gods and goddesses were large in numbers and the drift from the Vedic to the Purāṇic worship had been completed. The Purāṇic pantheon had been almost completed wherein the Vedic gods had been reborn. The earlier gods had assumed new names and associations and a long list of their nomenclature is seen. We can have even an "army of gods."[1]

Different Vedic gods with their various names and qualification are depicted in our literature. They were the Indra, Agni, Varuṇa, Sūrya, Yama, Tvaṣṭrā, Prithivī, Rudra and Vishṇu.[2] They were no longer the anthropomorphic form of nature and had already personal gods to their devotees. Thus, Vishṇu was no more a part of Sūrya, but an all powerful god; and the Purāṇic incarnations of Vishṇu were Rāma, Krishṇa and Buddha. Of the new advents to the older pantheon were Brahmā, Vishṇu, Śiva and other composite forms of Trimūrti, Kubera, Skanda, Śesha, Jayanta, Langali, Madan and the Lokapālas.

Among the Vedic goddesses only Śachi (wife of Indra), Saras-

[1]*Raghuvaṁśa*, VII. I; *Kumārasambhava*, II. 52 (Debasena).

[2]*Kumārasambhava*, II, I. 23, 26; III. 13; VII. 35, 41, 92; VII[r]. 41, 42, 43, 44; *Raghuvaṁśa*, I. 6; II. 42, 50, 54, 74; III. 23, 27, 38, 39, 42, 43, 46, 49, 53, 62, 64; IV. 3, 27, 28; V. 25, VI. 32, 49; VII. 13, 35; IX. 6, 24; IX. 6, 24; X. 9, 18, 26-35; 50, 51, 54; XI. 86; XVII. 81; *Ṛtusaṁhara*, I. 16; *Mālavikāgnimitra*, V. 2; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, VI. 30; *Mālavikāgnimitra*, V. 2.

vatī (or Bhārati) and Prithivī were retained.[1] But these also had been amply coloured by Purāṇic ideas, and when looked at through their Vedic concepts, they could hardly be recognised. Sarasvatī and Bhārati, unlike their Vedic counterpart, were not the two different goddesses; the latter was identified with the former and both denoted the goddess of learning. But the predominance of the Purāṇic goddesses were given to Lakshmī, Pārvati and the Seven Mothers.[2] There were also numerous demi-gods and goddesses, such as, the Gandharvas, Yakshas, Kinnaras, Kimpurushas; Vidyadharas, Siddhas, and their feminine counterparts were the Apsarās and Surāṇganas.[3]

Deification of animals and inanimate objects were the marked features of the popular religion and beliefs. The Vrisha (the bull or Nandi), the vehicle of Śiva, *Garuḍa* (the eagle), the *vāhana* of Vishṇu, Śesha (the thousand-headed serpent) the couch of Vishṇu and *Siṁha* (the lion), the vehicle of Pārvati, *Airāvata*, the *vāhana* of Indra, were all deified animals.[4] The certain cows, likewise, had been sanctified and were endowed with divine virtues.[5] The rivers like Gaṅgā, Yumunā and Sarasvatī were all deified and the three together made up the sacred confluence of Triveni.[6] Moreover, the ancient historical and mythical heroes like Parasurāma, Kārttaviryārjuna, Sagara, Yayāti, Dilipa, Raghu, Aja and many others had been endowed with divine powers.[7] The Purāṇic gods had also many powerful enemies. Rāvaṇa, Kāliya and Lavana had special importance. Rāhu and Ketu were two evil planets. Gaṇas (spirits) followed Śiva and Yoginis did the same for Pārvatī.[8]

[1]*Raghuvaṁśa*, III. 13, 23; IV. 6; IV. 29, X. 36, 54; *Kumārasambhava*, VII. 90.

[2]*Raghuvaṁśa*, I. 1; IV. 5; X. 8; *Kumārasambhava*, V. 6-29; VI. 80, 81, VIII. 18, 78; VII. 38, 39.

[3]*Raghuvaṁśa*, II. 60; V. 53; VI. 27; VII. 53; VIII. 64; *Kumārasambhava*, I. 4, 5, 8, 14; II. 14; VI. 39: *Vikramorvaśiyam*, I, II, III.

[4]*Raghuvaṁśa*, II. 35, 36; X. 7, 13; *Abijñānaśākuntala*, V.

[5]*Raghuvaṁśa*, I, 75-81; II.

[6]*Kumārasambhava*, VII. 42; *Raghuvaṁśa*, XIII. 54-58.

[7]*Raghuvaṁśa*, I, II, III, IV, VI. 38; XI. 61-68; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, III; *Mālavikāgnimitra*, p. 102.

[8]*Raghuvaṁśa*, II. 39; VI. 49; XI. 5; XII. 51, 55; XV. 17; *Kumārasambhava*, VII. 36, 40.

Indra

The supreme importance of the Ṛgvedic Indra was taken up by the Purāṇic Vishṇu and Śiva. He was no longer the ruler of heaven and was worshipped only occasionally at the first appearance of rainbow. According to the Purāṇic mythology, an earthly king performing a hundred sacrifices claimed to occupy the office of Indra who would in turn try to prevent him to complete that number. That was why, Indra used to steal the horse consecrated to the Rājasūya sacrifice for completing hundred such rites. Indra still had some importance in society, which could be ascertained from his numerous names, *viz.*, Vajrī, Puruhūta, Śatakratu, Vajrapāṇi, Purandara, Surendra, Śakra, Maghavā, Vāsava, Sureśvara, and Sahasranetra.[1] His popularity can be inferred from the epigraphic record of the Gupta period, for the heroic exploits of Samudragupta and Chandragupta II have been compared with those of Indra.[2] Even his son Jayanta was considered as an ideal prince.[3]

Agni, Yama, Varuṇa and Taṣṭrā

Agni, another important Ṛgvedic deity, was receded to the background and was referred to only in connection with different sacrifices, marriages, etc. He was called *Havirbhuja*, for he received *ghee* (clarified butter), flower, rice, etc.[4]

Yama (Daṇḍa, Vaivasvata, Antaka) are referred to in the first and tenth *maṇḍalas* of Ṛgveda.[5] He gives bliss to the good and woe to the bad.[6] He is referred to as Antaka, destroyer of the enemies in the Gupta inscriptions.[7] Another, Ṛgvedic God,

[1]Macdonell, A. A., *Vedic Mythology*, p. 59 (Ref. 250 hymns are addressed to him); *Raghuvaṁśa*, II. 42; III. 11, 23, 38, 39, 42, 43, 44, 46, 49, 50, 51, 53, 58, 59, 64; IV. 3, 28; VI. 23; *Kumārasambhava* II. 1. VII. 45; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, VI.

[2]Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta and Mathura Stone Inscription of Chandragupta II, Fleet, *CII*, III.

[3]*Raghuvaṁśa*, III. 23; VI. 78.

[4]*Raghuvaṁśa*, V. 25; VII. 20, 24. X. 50, 79; *Kumārasambhava*, VII. 79, 81, *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, V.

[5]*Kumārasambhava*, II. 23; XII. 95; Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 171.

[6]*RV. V.* 42. 6.

[7]Allahabad Pillar Inscription and Eran Inscription of Samudragupta; Mathura Stone Inscription of Chandragupta II. Fleet, *CII*, III.

Varuṇa became a venerable water-god (*Jalesvara*) who was the controller of waters, oceans, rivers.[1] In the Kushāṇa and Gupta sculptures he is on the back of a crocodile with a noose (*pāśa*) in one hand. The Gupta emperor also referred to him in their epigraphs.[2] Tvaṣṭra was popular god of the Ṛgvedic pantheon and was the chief architect of gods. He was later known as Viśvakarma.[3]

Rudra

The Ṛgvedic Rudra held a better position in the Classical age and he was the popular Śiva of Kālidāsa. Śiva, Brahmā and Vishṇu make up the Hindu triad. Śiva was considered as the supreme deity and his so many names and attributes signified his all-powerful character. He was Īśa, Īśvara, Maheśvara, Parameśvara, Vṛshbhadhvaja, Śulabhṛt, Pashupati, Tryambaka, Trinetra, Sthāṇu, Nilalohita, Nilakaṇṭha, Śitikaṇṭha, Viśveśvara, Chaṇḍeśvara, Mahākāla, Śambhu, Hara, Giriśa, Bhūteśvara, Bhūtanātha, Śaṅkara, Śiva and Pinākī.[4] Several temples, such as, Mahākāla temple at Ujjaini, Viśveśvara (Viśvanātha) at Banaras, Śiva temple at Gokarna, Liṅgarāja temple at Bhuvaneśvara[5] and others, were dedicated to him. There were eight different manifestations (*aṣṭa-mūrti*) of Śiva; and they were Rudra, Bhava, Śarva, Īśāṇa, Paśupati, Bhūma, Ugra and Mahādeva;[6] but in the *Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā* they are the other forms of Agni, Aśani, etc.[7] Similarly, in the *Satapatha* and *Sankhyāyana* Brāhmaṇas they are the eight different manifestations of Agni. The *Śakuntalā* also refers to Śiva as Īśa (the supreme Lord).[8]

[1]*Raghuvaṁśa*, IX. 24; XVII. 81; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, V, 8; *RV*, I. 161. 14; II. 28. 4; V, 85. 6; VII. 49. 3, 87. 6; VIII. 58, 12; *RV*, IX. 90. 2.

[2]Allahabad Pillar Inscription and Eran Inscription of Samudragupta; Mathura Stone Inscription of Chandragupta II. Fleet, *CII*, III.

[3]Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 119.

[4]*Ibid*, p. 74; *Vajāsaneyi Saṁhitā*, III. 8; *Satapathā Brahmana*, II. 6. 2-9; *Raghuvaṁśa*, I. I; II. 35, 36, 38, 39, 41, 42, 46, 54, 58; III. 23, 49; IV. 32; XVI. 51, XVIII. 24; *Kumārasambhava*, II. 26. 57; III. 17; V. 77; VI. 76, 94, 95; VII. 40, 44, 51; *Mālavikāgnimitra*, I. I; *Vikramorvaśīyam*, I. I.; IV 65.

[5]Later period.

[6]*Abhijñānaśākuntala*, I I; *Raghuvaṁśa*, II, 35; *Mālavikāgnimitra*, I. I.

[7]39. 8.

[8]*Abhijñānaśākuntala*, I. I.

Śiva was, thus, referred to as Īśa, the supreme lord, presiding over dissolution and was associated with Brahmā, the creator and Vishṇu, the preserver. According to the tradition of the Deluge he had taken deadly poison *(Kālkūṭa)* just to save the world of creation, as a result, his neck was turned into dark-blue colour and had assumed the name of Nīlakaṇṭha, Śitikaṇṭha and Nīlalohita. He also used to roam about in the cremation ground along with his associate ghosts.[1]

In the Purushasūkata of the Ṛgveda, Śiva encircled the earth from all sides and was above it and not within it.[2] According to another tradition, after Destruction *(Pralaya)* the earth was submerged under water; but Śiva held it up. He was the image of the universe; he was the Mahāyogī and had crescent on his forehead and animals skin as his cloth and hair was matted. All the Lokapālas including Indra bowed down to him. He was also the cause of creation, preservation and destruction of animate and inanimate objects.[3] Quite a large number of Śiva and Śiva with Pārvatī images in stone and metals[4] have been discovered from different parts of India; and the phallic *(Liṅga)* form of Śiva were also worshipped. Kālidāsa has given a complete picture of Śiva image in his *Kumārasambhava.* Ashes *(Bhasma)* is besmeared over his body and a crescent serves a tilaka mark over his forehead; he wears an elephant hide. He uses snakes just to decorate his body. He is attended by his *Gaṇas* with their swords and by gods and goddesses like Brahmā, Vishṇu, Gaṅgā and Yamunā.[5] He rides his favourite bull (Nandi) and quite a number of above specimens have been discovered in stone.

Thus in course of time quasi-anthropomorphic symbols like His *Liṅga* became quite popular in the Hindu society. Even today to the cultured Hindu phallic association is only suggestive

[1]*Raghuvaṁśa*, II. 44; *Kumārasambhava,* II. 77; V. 68; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, I. I.

[2]*RV*, X. 90, I.

[3]*Raghuvaṁśa*, II. 44; *Kumārasambhava*, II. 60; V. 78; 78-81; VI. 75, 76, 77, 78; VII. 33, 34, 36, 45; *Vikramorvaśiyam*, I. I; IV. 65; VII. 33, X. 90, I; *Mālavikāgnimitra*, I. I.

[4]They belong to different dates.

[5]*Kumārāsambhava*, III. 41; VII. 32-37; 42, 43, 49; *Mālavikāgnimitra*, I. I.; *Vikramorvaśiyam*, IV. 65.

of the philosophic concept that God is a point, formless, or that He is the One.

"The ideas connected with sex symbolism in Hindu art and ritual are generally misinterpreted by those who take them out of the environment of Indian social life. In the Upanishads sexual relationship is described as one of the means of apprehending the divine nature, and throughout oriental literature it is constantly used metaphorically to express the true relationship between the human soul and God."[1] Again the suggestion of Sir M. Monier Williams is very applicable to the whole question of sex symbolism in Indian religion : "In India the relation between the sexes is regarded as a sacred mystery, and is never held to be suggestive of improper or indecent ideas."

Brahmā

Next to Śiva, Vishṇu and Brahmā were very popular in society; he was also very familiar in contemporary literature. Brahmā was called self-born *(svayambhu)*, four faced, the lord of expression *(vāgīśa)* the creator *(prabhavaḥ)* of the mobile and immobile universe; he was the cause of creation, maintenance and destruction and their important aspects, such as, *Sattwa*, *Raja* and *Tama* were within him.[2]

According to the Purāṇic tradition, he had split up his body into a man and a woman for the sake of creation; he was, thus, called the father and mother. Moreover, "he is unborn *(aja)*. He is the cause of the universe; but he himself is without a cause and an end; he is the end of the world. Himself without a beginning, he is the beginning of the world; and himself without a master, he is the lord of all. He becomes both fluid and solid, gross and subtle, light and heavy, manifest and unmanifest at will. He is the father of the fathers, god of the gods and the creator of creators." He is thus, called Dhātā, Vidhātā, Vedhā, Chaturmukha and Chaturbuja. The goddess Sarasvatī was his wife. The bearded figure of Brahmā with Sarasvatī on his lap have been discovered from different parts of

[1]Havell, E.B., *The Art Heritage of India*, p. 158, Eliade Mircea, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, pp. 254-73; Coomaraswamy, Tantric Doctrine of Divine Bi-Unity, *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, XIX, 1938, pp. 173-82, Wilson, H. H., *Vishnu Purana*, preface, p. XIIV.

[2]*Kumārasambhava*, II. 1-6; 17.

India. He held the Vedas, *Kamandulu, Rudrāksha* and *Sruvā* with his four hands. Although he was a popular deity, not a single early temple of Brahmā has been discovered in India; one of the late mediaeval period has been found at Pushkara. But the images of Brahmā are found along with several other deities in different Brāhmanical temples.[1]

Prajāpati *alias* Brahmā finds frequent mention in our literature. The *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* and *Aśvalayana Gṛhyasutra* make him identical with Brahmā; and he was the father of gods and of all beings and held in his arms the whole world of objects.[2]

Vishṇu

Vishṇu was a sun deity of the Ṛgveda;[3] but in the Classical age he commanded supreme power and importance in religious life of the day. He was popularly known as, Hari, Purushottama, Trivikrama, Puṇḍarīkāksha, Purāṇa, Kavi, Chaturmūrti, Purusha, Paramesvara, Sāraṅgi, Mahāvarāha, Achyuta, Balanishūdana, Chakradhara, Bhagavān and Kṛshṇa.[4] "Vishṇu is reclining on the couch formed by the thousand-hooded serpent; his feet rest on the lap of Lakshmī sitting on a lotus; his body is covered by the silk garment. He wears on his chest the *Kaustubha* gem and is waited upon by the humble *Garuḍa.* He is beyond the scope of word and mind. He is the creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe."[5] Three *guṇas, viz. Satva, Raja* and *Tama* were emanated from him.[6] "Immeasurable himself, he has measured out all the worlds; indifferent to all the desires himself, he grants the desires of all; himself unconquered, he has conquered all; himself imperceptible, he is the cause of all the perceptible world. He is present in the heart of the devotees and yet not near, free from desire, yet performing penance, compassionate, yet not affected by grief, old and yet

[1]*Kumārasambhava,* II, 3, 5, 7-15, 17; VII. 43; *Raghuvaṁśa,* I. 29; V. 36.

[2]*Aśvalayana Gṛhyasutra,* III. 4; *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa,* II. 4, 1; XI. I. 16. 14, *Taittrīya Brāhmaṇa,* VIII. 1. 3. 4; RV., X. 121.

[3]*RV,* IX, 3; XVI. 55.

[4]*Raghuvaṁśa,* III. 49; IV.27; VI. 49; VII. 35, 56; IX. 3; X. 6, 9, 19, 22, 33, 35, 36; XI. 86; XII. 70; XVI. 55; XVIII. 8.

[5]*Ibid,* VI. 49; X. 7, 8, 10, 13, 15, 16.

[6]*Ibid,* X. 17.

not subject to decay. Though omniscient, he is himself unknown; though the source of all, he is self-existent; though himself the lord of all, he has no superior; though he is single, immutable one, he assumes all forms."[1]

Again, according to the same Purāṇic tradition, "unborn, he takes birth; actionless, he destroys enemies; and in sleeping, he keeps vigilant. Able to enjoy the objects of sense, such as, sound and others, he practises austere asceticism; able to protect the people, he yet lives in utter indifference. He purifies a person, simply when he remembers him. He is the primeval bard."[2] Sometimes he was also known as Nārāyaṇa.[3]

Mahāvarāha, Bhagavāna, Rāma and Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa were the incarnation of Vishṇu who had rescued the Earth from the demons *(Daityas)*—Hiraṇyakasipu, Rāvaṇa, Kaṁsa and others. He was also known as Vāsudeva.[4] According to the Purāṇic tradition the Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa legend was still current in society. In the Mathura museum a stone slab depicts the carved scene of Vāsudeva, the father of Krishṇa crossing the Yamunā with the new-born baby over to Gokula in order to shield the child from the wrath of Kaṁsa. Kālidāsa also refers to Vishṇu as Gopāla-Kṛshṇa with his wife Rukmiṇī; he has also stated Kāliya and Kaustubha with regard to Kṛshṇa.[5] Moreover, Kālidāsa's concept of Trimūrti is nothing but the monotheistic outlook of the poet; and in his writings he has given very special importance to Vishṇu, Śiva and Brahmā.

Vishṇu became the family deity of the Gupta rulers of Magadha and *Garuḍa* became their state emblem. They used *Garuḍa* seal and *Garuḍa* standard on their coins and inscriptions. Samudragupta claimed himself as the Lord Vishṇu in human form, and his *Garuḍa* seal (*garutmad-aṅka*) is referred to in his Allahabad pillar inscription. He also claimed himself as the *Achinta-Purusha* (Inscrutable Being, *i.e.* Vishṇu) and was "the cause of the prosperity of the pious and the destruction of the

[1]*Ibid*, X. 18-23.
[2]*Ibid*, X. 24-31.
[3]*Vikramorvaśiyam*, I. 3.
[4]*Raghuvaṁśa*, VI. 49; VII. 56; X. 35; *Mālavikāgnimitra*, V. 2; Bhandarkar, R. G., *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Systems*, p. 45.
[5]*Mālavikāgnimitra*, V. 2; *Raghuvaṁśa*, VI. 49.

wicked."[1] It has a close similarity with a verse of the Gītā which refers to the descent of God on earth in physical form, for protecting the pious and destroying the sinners.[2]

His son and successor, Chandragupta II claimed himself as the *Paramabhāgavata*, *Parama-Vaishṇava*, *Parama-daivata*, *Achintya-Purusha*. He was, thus, the most influential advocate of the Bhāgavata form of Vaishṇavism. Again, on the obverse of the Chakravikrama type of his gold coins, he receives gift (*Prasāda*) from the hand of Vishṇu.[3] Their royal patronage seemed to be the cause of the great popularity of this creed all over the country at least from the fifth century AD. His daughter, Prabhāvatīguptā, the Vākāṭaka princess was a devotee of Bhāgavat Rāmagirisvāmin (lord of the Rāmagiri, *i.e.* modern Ramtek near Nagpur) who was identical with Rāma-Dāśarathi.[4] Although his son and successor Kumāragupta I was a follower of Kārttikeya, he also paid respect to Bhāgavata (Vishṇu)[5] and this tradition was followed by his son Skandagupta.[6]

Another important feature of the Bhāgavata religion was the wide popularity of the *Avatāras* (incarnations of Vishṇu). But the origin of the concept of the *Avatāra* can be traced back to the Vedic literature; and the *Vāmana* (Dwarf), *Matsya* (Fish) and *Kūrma* (Tortoise) are described. *Prajāpati* (Vishṇu) assumed the form of a tortoise and created offspring; in the form of a boar, he raised the earth from the bottom of the ocean, in the form of fish, saved the earth from the Great Deluge; again in the form of Nṛsiṁha (man-lion), saved the earth from evils.[7] The *Mahābhārata* also contains a list of incarnations *(Avatāra)* of

[1]Sircar, *Select Ins.*, I.

[2]*Raghuvaṁśa*, IV. 8.

[3]*EI*, XXVI, pp. 318; Majumdar and Pusalker, *The Classical Age*, VII, pp. 109-11.

[4]Sircar, *Select Ins.*, I, p. 415 of the *Meghaduta* (I. 12) reference to the footprints of Raghupati and worship of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana in the temples of Ramtek at the present time.

[5]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 41.

[6]His Junagarh Rock Inscription (Vishnu was the Lord of Lakshmi), Sircar, *Select Inscription*, I.

[7]*RV.* VI. 49, 13; *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* I. 2. 5.; I.8.18; XIV. 1, 2; *Taittrīya Saṁhitā*, VII. 1.5; *Taittrīya Brāhmana*, I. 1. 3; *Taittrīya Aranyaka*, X. 1. 6; Macdonell, A. A. and Keith, A. B., *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects*, II, p. 130.

Vishṇu in human and animal forms for the maintenance of the standard of righteousness in the world.[1] Again, the Purāṇic tradition of *Avatāra*, such as *Matsya*, *Kūrma*, *Varāha*, *Nṛsiṁha*, *Vāmana*, Rāma, Buddha and *Kalki* are also referred to a Mamallapuram inscription of the eight century AD.[2] Moreover, a Damodarpur inscription of the time of Budhagupta records the names of the gods *Svetavarāhasvamin* and *Kokamukhasvamin*, both representing the *Varāha Avatara*.[3] The temples of these gods are situated at *Varāhachatra (Varāha-Kṣetra)* situated at the confluence of the rivers Kauśiki and Kokā in Nepal.[4] The Khoh copper-plate inscription of the fifth (or sixth century) records a grant of land in favour of Bhāgavat.[5] The influence of Vaishṇava mythology is also noticeable in the archaeological remains in different parts of India. The bas-reliefs at Bādāmi depict Vishṇu lying on the serpent Ananta with Lakshmī rubbing his feet, the Boar, Dwarf and Man-lion incarnations and also Hari-Hara.[6] Over and above, a temple at Deogarh (Jhansi, M.P.) of the sixth century AD has the representation of Vishṇu reclining on *Ananta-nāga*.

Skanda; Kubera

Another important male deity was Skanda who was the god of war and was the commander-in-chief of the celestial army. He was also popularly known as Sarajanma, Kārttikeya and Kumāra.[7] The six-faced figures of Kārttikeya mounting on his favourite peacock as depicted in stones are available in different museums. One Gupta inscription of the year 414 refers to the temple of Svāmi-Mahāsena at Bilsad. Mahārājādhirāja Kumāragupta I was a follower of Kārttikeya (Kumāra) and had issued a number of the Peacock type of gold coins.[8] Even the Imperial Kushāṇas of the earlier period worshipped Skanda, Mahāsena,

[1]IV. 7-8 (Gita); *Mahābhārata*, XII. 349, 27; 339. 77-99.

[2]*Memoirs of Archaeological Survey of India*, No. 26, p. 5; *Matsya Purāṇa*, 57. 237-48; *Vayu Purāṇa*, I, p. 328.

[3]Sircar, *Select Ins.*, I, 98. 3,0.

[4]*IHQ*, XXI, pp. 56-60.

[5]Sircar, *Select Ins.*, I, p. 370.

[6](Ref. time of the Early Chalukyas) R. D. Banerji, Bas-reliefs of Badami, p. 24.

[7]*Raghuvaṁśa*, II. 37, III. 23; VI. 4; VII. 1; *Kumarasambhava*, II.52.

[8]*JBBRAS*, XX. p. 395 (also Gupta Coins).

Komaro and Bizago.[1] Kārttikeya is now worshipped as a fertility cult worshipped by the barren ladies in Bengal.

Kubera was the lord of Alakā and was one of the Lokapālas as narrated by Kālidāsa.[2] He was perhaps a popular deity in the Gupta period and the wealthy monarchs of this period claimed themselves as Kubera.[3] Many stone sculptures of Kubera have been discovered and are preserved in different museums. He is represented as a typical banker *(bania)*, sitting with a bulging belly with deformed shoulders holding a purse in his hand.

GODDESSES

Kāli; Umā; Sarasvatī; Śachi: Gaṅgā; Yamunā; Seven Mothers and Lakshmī.

Next to the gods, their female counterparts were worshipped by the people of the Classical age. Kāli was the primitive mother goddess of the Indian people and was the consort of the father god, Śiva and was altogether different from Umā. Her human figure symbolises both creation and destruction of the living beings. According to our Purāṇic tradition she stood on the body of Śiva in jet black colour, having necklace of human skulls.[4]

"In Kālī, the Ender of Time and Giver of Nirvāṇa, the female principle is worshipped as the Mother of all the Gods. As the *Śakti* of Śiva in his aspect as Mahā-kāl, Time, it is Kāli who, at the end of a cosmic cycle, destroys even her own husband and dissolves all the worlds, reducing nature and all the *devas* (gods) to their formless, unconditioned state, when Nārāyana reposes again on the primordial waters. The *Nirvāṇa Tantram* says : "As the lighting is born from the cloud and disappears within the cloud, so Brahmā and all other gods take birth from Kālī and will disappear in Kālī." Her images are always black

[1]*Ibid*, p. 385; (also Kushana coins).

[2]*Vikramorvaśiyam*, I. 4; *Raghuvaṁśa*, IV. 56; V. 26, 28; IX. 24, 25; XIV. 20; XVI 10; XVII. 81; *Kumārasambhava* II. 22.

[3]Allahabad Pillar Inscription, and Eran Stone Ins. of Samudragupta; Mathura Stone Ins. of Chandragupta II; Bhitari Stone pillar inscription of Skandagupta, etc., Fleet, *CII*, III; Sircar, *Select Ins.*, I.

[4]*Kumārasambhava*, VII. 39.

because "as all colours, white, yellow, and others, are absorbed in black, so all the elements are in the end absorbed in Kālī; and as the absence of all colours is black, so Kālī is represented black in order to teach the worshipper that the goddess is without substance and without *guṇas*."[1]

Umā was another popular goddess of this period. She was the wife of Lord Śiva. Her popularity can be suggested from her so many names, such as Pārvatī, Ambikā, Bhavāni, Gaurī, Nagendra Kanyā; Maheśwari,[2] etc. The figure of Ambikā seated on her lion is represented by the gold coins of Samudragupta.[3] Moreover, Sarasvatī (Bhāratī) was the consort of Brahmā. She was the popular goddess of learning and of fine arts and sciences. Her figure in stone with a *vīnā* in her right hand has been discovered from different parts of India. Śachī was another goddess who had prime importance in the Vedic period and was the consort of Indra and was, thus, known as Indrāṇī. Even to-day, in every marriage ceremony she is invoked as a symbol of ideal wife. Again, the popularity of Gaṅgā and Yamunā are still current in Hindu society. According to the Hindu tradition, they were the attendants of Śiva; Gaṅgā has been originated from the toe of Vishṇu and the crocodile and the tortoise are their vehicles respectively.[4] In the gold coins of Samudragupta, Gaṅgā is seated on the back of a crocodile (Makara).[5] In the rituals of the Hindu marriages, the Seven Mothers (Sapta-Mātrikā) are frequently referred to. The *Amarakośa* enumerates them as, Brāhmī, Maheśwarī, Kumārī, Vaishṇavī, Varāhī, Indrāṇī, and Chāmuṇḍā. They are carved out in a stone relief which is kept in the Mathurā Museum; and we have another reference to them in the Bihar stone pillar inscription of Skandagupta.[6]

Lakshmī (or Śrī) was the consort of Vishṇu. She was called Śrīmā Devatā in a Bharhut inscription of the Śunga period and a temple of Śrī (Lakshmī) is referred to in the *Arthaśāstra* of

[1]Havell, E. B., *The Art Heritage of India*, p. 159.

[2]*Kumārasambhava*, I. 26, 43; III. 58, 62; V. I. 50; VI. 80; VII. 95; VIII. 18, 78, etc. *Raghuvaṁśa*, I. 1.

[3]*CIC*, III.

[4]*Kumārasambhava*, VI. 70; VII. 42.

[5]*CIC*, III.

[6]Fleet, *CII*, III.

Kauṭilya.[1] Her popularity was also indicated by the early coins of India and Bactria. The early rulers of Ayodhya, Mathura and Pantaleon, Agathakles, Maues, Azilises and others issued coins with Lakshmī on the reverse.[2] The Śrī-Lakshmī cult may have something to do with the worship of Greek goddesses, especially Pallas Athene which was introduced in India by the Indo-Greek rulers. Moreover, the Sāṅkhya doctrine of Purusha and Prakṛti might have some influence on the Vishnu-Lakshmī concept of the Gupta period. Many of the Gupta emperors paid special respect to her by depicting her figure on their gold coins. She is usually seated on lotus with a cornucopia (horn of plenty) in her hand and she is also dressed in Indian manner. The Junagarh inscription of Skandagupta mentions Vishṇu as the Lord of Lakshmī.[3] In sculpture and in the description of Kālidāsa she sits on a lotus with the feet of Vishṇu on her lap.[4]

Pitris and Rishis, Vidyādharas, Kinnaras, Yakshas, Siddhas and Gaṇas.

Besides the all-powerful celestial beings, the people of this age used to worship and to offer oblations to many demi-gods, goddesses and spirits (of the departed soul). It is a normal practice even to-day that the departed ancestors (Pitṛ Purusha) receive oblations and homage from their sons and successors. Moreover, the primeval sages like Bhrigu, Pulasya, Pulaha, Kratu, Angiras, Mārīci, Daksha, Atri and Vaśiṣtha were highly respected and received regular offerings from the people. They had permanent residence in heaven and had intimate touch with gods. Thus, they had also attained divinity.[5]

The Vidyādharas, Kinnaras, Kimpurushas, Punyajanas, Yakshas, Siddhas and Gaṇas also possessed semi-divine powers which might reflect the contemporary popular beliefs and

[1]Barua and Sinha, *Bharhut Inscriptions*, p. 73-74; *Arthāśastra of Kautilya*, II. 4.

[2]Allan, *BMCGD*, pp. 131, 149, 173, 252; Whitehead, R. B., *Catalogue of Coins in the Punjab Museum*, I, pp. 16, 135. Banerjea, *Development of Hindu Iconography*, p. 151.

[3]Fleet, *CII*, III.

[4]*Raghuvaṁśa*, IV. 5; VI. 58; IX. 16; X, 8.

[5]*Raghuvaṁśa*, I. 66, 67, 69, 71; X 6; *Kumārasambhava*, I, 16; *Abhijñānaśākuntala* VI. 25; also *RV.* IV. 42.8; X. 109, 4; 130. 7; *Satāpatha Brāhmana*, II. 1. 2. 4; XIV. 5. 2. 6., *Brihadaranyāka Upanishad*, II. 2. 6.

superstitions. The Vidyādhara had the power of roaming about on the top of the Himalayas.[1] In the later period, Harshvardhana makes one Vidyādhara the hero of his *Nāgānanda.* They were of the human head and the body of a horse and vice versa. Such a specimen in stone is kept in our different museums.[2] They were also called Kimpurushas. In the *Meghaduta* of Kālidāsa one Yaksha was an attendant of Kubera; he was a resident of Alakā. We can have the figures of Yaksha and Yakshiṇī in our different museums. Again, Siddhas and Gaṇas were the attendants of Lord Śiva.[3]

The above gods and goddesses were worshipped through their numerous images (Pratimā) and these idols were worshipped in temples.[4] Kālidāsa refers to several temples of gods, such as, Viśveśvara (Śiva) temple at Benares Mahākāla (Śiva or Chandeśwara) temple at Ujjayinī, etc.[5]

Religious Rites, Ceremonies and Sacrifices

Sacred fire is essential in different religious practices and ceremonies. The brahmachārī performed his various rites by sacred fire; the householder offered his daily oblations and other sacrifices with the help of it. It was the sacred fire of which the couple made rounds at the time of marriage and they were expected to kindle it merrily throughout their life.[6]

According to the Hindu tradition, various ceremonies (Samskāras) were necessary mainly for the twice-born (dvija) and they were mainly the Puṁsavana, Jātakarma, Nāmadheya, Chuḍākarma, Upanayana, Godāna, Vivāha and Daśāha.[7] The Puṁsavana rite was performed just to quicken the foetus of a pregnant lady for a healthy male child who would free the family from the debt of ancestors. A grain of barley and masha along with a small quantity of curd were placed on the right palm of the lady who

[1] *Kumārasambhava*, I. 7.
[2] *Ibid*, I. 8, 11.
[3] *Ibid*, I. 5; 54; VII. 40.
[4] *Raghuvaṁśa*, X. 7, 60; XVI, 39.
[5] *Raghuvaṁśa*, VI. 34, XVI. 39; XVIII. 24; *Meghaduta*, Purva, 33 (Mahakalaniketana).
[6] *Raghuvaṁśa* I. 6; V. 25; *Manusmṛti*, II. 321; III. 100, 185.
[7] *Raghuvaṁśa*, III, 10. 18, 21, 28, 29, 33; V. 36; VII; VIII. 29, 37; X. 67, 78, *Kumārasambhava*, II; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, pp. 219, 249, 261, *Vikramorvaśiyam*, p. 128.

took it before the chanting of the mantras.[1] The Jātakarma (natal ceremony) was performed as a purificatory rite of a new born child; at last the father of the baby gave him honey with clarified butter. In the *Prayogaratna* of Nārāyaṇabhaṭṭa the details of this ceremony is referred to. The Nāmadheya (naming of the child) was done by the father just after the purificatory bath of the baby and the Chuḍākarma (keeping a bunch of long hair in the form of Śikhā) was performed generally after a year of his birth.[2] Again, at a Upanayana ceremony a boy of a twice-born (Dvija) family took a sacred thread. He was then initiated to the Vedic studies. Moreover, when a boy was at least sixteen years of age, he had to perform a Godana (first shaving) ceremony.[3] Among all the ceremonies, marriage (Vivāha) was the most important and a marriage of a couple was solemnised through various rituals. The last was the Daśāha which took place immediately after the death of a twice-born (Dvija).[4]

The emperor of this period performed various sacrifices, such as Aśvamedha, Vājapeya and Viśvajit. The Putreshti-Yajña was performed by one desiring a son.[5] Many other sacrifices are frequently referred to by Kālidāsa. Moreover, the religious observances (Vratas) with fasting were commonly observed by the people and certain rites were performed consequently. It was broken with a meagre meal (Pāraṇa) when Brāhmaṇas were fed along with presents to them. Vratas were kept performed on the fulfilment of a vow, and on certain religious festivals.[6]

Religious Festivals: Puruhuta, Kakabali, Ritutsava

The gods were worshipped in different religious festivals. On

[1]*Raghuvaṁśa*, I. 66; X. 2; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, VI. 25, *Vikramorvaśiyam*, V. 9.

[2]*Raghuvaṁśa*, III. 21, 28; *Manusmṛti*, II. 35.

[3]*Raghuvaṁśa*, III; 33; XI. 36, 44, 64; *Manusmṛti*, II. 65.

[4]*Raghuvaṁśa*, V. 6; VII. 57, 72; VIII. 26, 71, 73; XI. 16, XII. 56; *Kumārasambhava*, IV. 22.

[5]*Raghuvaṁśa*, I. 1. 4. 26, 31, 44, 80, 82, 84; V. 1; VI. 23, 38; VIII. 30? 75; IX. 20, 21, 22, 30; X. 4, 51, 79; XI. 1, 24, 25, 30, 37, 82; XIII. 37, 61, XVI. 35; XVII. 80; *Kumārasambhava*, I. 17, 51; II. 46; IV. 72; VI. 28; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, VII. 24; VI. 1., Also *Manusmṛti*, V. 44.

[6]*Raghuvaṁśa*, II. 25, 39, 55; VIII. 95; X. 41; XIII. 67; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, p. 189; *Meghaduta*, p. 22, 44.

the first appearance of the rainbow the Puruhūta festival was observed in honour of Indra. It might indicate the invitation of rain for the good of cultivation in the agricultural society. Again, Kākabali was performed by the wife for the safety of the husband living in a distant land. Over and above, the great vernal festival (Ṛtutsava) was celebrated on the return of the spring. According to tradition, it took place in honour of Kāmadeva, the god of love, who was worshipped with mango blossoms and the ceremony was observed by the distribution of sweets. This popular festival is at present identical with Holi, the carnival of the Hindus, when people from all walks of life take the liberty of throwing coloured water and powder to others. It is also known as Vasantotsava in Bengal and people also enjoy songs, dances and dramatic performances for that purpose. The *Mālavikāgnimitra* of Kālidāsa was first staged on such an occasion.[1] All the festivities were marked by the decoration of houses, cities and villages according to the means of the people who also put on fineries just to grace the occasion.[2]

Superstitions and Beliefs

A blind faith in superstitions and omens was veritable. Weakness for these is found in all early people and the Indians were no exception to it. According to the consensus of opinion the throbbing of the right eye indicated ill fortune to women and that of the left one good to them. Likewise, the throbbing of the right arm in the case of a man was a green signal for his good luck. Similarly, the noise of a jackal was considered as an ill omen and the work-in-hand was postponed to counteract the effects of the omen. Likewise, the vultures were considered very inauspicious birds.[3]

Some sort of occult practices were still current in the Classical Age. Some people used to practise the Tiraskāriṇi-Vidyā and could acquire the power of remaining invisible all on a sudden from their spectators. Moreover, a peculiar Śikhāvandhana-Vidyā was also known to them; it was also popularly known as

[1] *Raghuvaṁśa*, VII. 4, XII. 3; *Kumārasambhava* VII. 3; *Meghāduta*. p. 12.

[2] *Raghuvaṁśa*, VII. 4, XII. 3; *Kumārasambhava*, VII. 3; *Meghāduta*, p. 12.

[3] *Raghuvaṁśa* XI. 26; XVI. 12; *Vikramorvaśiyam*, III. 9; *Abhijñāna-śākuntala*, VII : *Ibid*, p. 161; *Mālavikāgnimitra*, p. 92.

Aparājitā. According to this method, they were taught certain charms from their teacher (guru) and they used to repeat them (mantras) and as they repeated them, they were to tie their hairs. As long as the tie remained undisturbed, they were a positive proof against the molestation from their enemies. The people had great faith in palmistry and astrology. By reading palms one could read the fortune of others, and different heavenly bodies like the planets and stars had some effect on the life and fortune of human being. Thus, a class of fortune-tellers could read and foretell the destinies of people. In the Maurya period they also received regular salaries from the state and perhaps they were the state astrologers.[1]

According to tradition a very miserly person after his death became a serpent and used to guard his hidden treasure. It is also believed that a wild cobra could be reduced to a helpless creature and made captive by a snake charmer. The snake-bite was sought to be remedied by the performance of a rite called Udakumbha-vidhāna, that is, by using charmed water from a specially enchanted water jar.[2] It was believed that an adverse fate could be reconciled through the propitiation of gods and spirits. Some powerful herbs (generally aparājitā) were kept in amulets which were commonly used by the people as a protection against any kind of evil.[3]

In such a highly religious society many of the Purāṇic traditions and mythology were still current in the Classical Age. Thus the story of the sacrificial horse of Sagara and Kapila Muni, the birth of Agastya from a jar, the birth of the Gaṅgā from the toe of Vishṇu and her descent to Earth from the matted hair of Śiva through the efforts of Bhagīratha, the gods moving in the sky, celestial women, the flying mountains, Bali's deceit by Vishṇu, the rescue Earth by Mahāvarāha (Vishṇu), the fire from the Śamī tree and the birth of Hāriṇī in the form of Indumatī were still current in that age. They were freely used by Kālidāsa in his different works. Over and above, magical

[1] *Kumārasambhava*, V. 58; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, *VI*. 28; p. 189; *Mālavikāgnimitra*, p. 71; *Vikramorvaśiyam*, pp. 40, 41, 47, 49, 72; *Arthāśastra*. Bk. V. Ch. III.

[2] *Raghuvaṁśa*, II. 32; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, VI. 28, *Mālavikāgnimitra*, pp. 69, 82.

[3] *Raghuvaṁśa*, XVI. 74, 83; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, pp. 248, 249.

incantations and occult practices were freely used by the people.[1] In this respect the picture of society as depicted by Kālidāsa was very much similar to that of the *Daśakumāracharita* of Daṇḍin.

Thus, in the Classical Age the religious outlook of the people was very rich, varied and vigorous; and Bhakti (devotion and love for God) was the predominant factor of that outlook. Bhakti was not only confined to God, but it expressed itself in fine sentiments and deep attachments towards near and dear ones, towards fellow-beings, harmony among the followers of different sects and absolute religious toleration. The austere ideal of the impersonal gods were replaced by the personal deities with common human sentiments such as Vishṇu, Śiva, Kārttikeya, Sūrya, Lakshmī, Durgā and a host of others only for the sake of Bhakti (devotion). The personal god was conceived of by the devotee as a Saviour, worthy of trust and confidence, ready to shower blessings and grace on the devotee and always prepared to save him from dangers and difficulties. The Absolute was attainable to man not by his divine knowledge but by his devotion (Bhakti) which found complete fruition through the spontaneous growth and development of Vaishṇavism and Śaivism on an all-India basis. Thus, he could attain salvation.

Again, the devotion of Vishṇu, Śiva, Kārttikeya, the Sun, Buddha and others gave vent to the construction of the lofty pillars, beautiful gateways, splendid monuments; awe-inspiring images, magnificent temples and monasteries. Consequently, different images were popularly worshipped in the public temples and monasteries and extensive rites and ceremonies were also introduced; temples and monasteries became the seat of popular religion. Under this new setting a new religious outlook and practices developed. Thus, the Brahmin priests presented the main principles of the neo-Hinduism, philosophy and ethics in a popular and attractive form in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, Purāṇas and Smṛtis, which are said to have received their final shape and form in the Gupta Age. Furthermore, in the domain of religion and philosophy there had been the systematic exposition of the teachings of various schools of thought.

[1]*Kumārasambhava*, I. 20; VI 70; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, IV. 3.

Buddhism

Buddhism found a new lease of life in the hands of famous Buddhist philosophers and thinkers like Asanga, Vasuvandhu, Kumārajīva, Paramārtha, Dignāga and many others. In the upper Gangetic valley, Bihar and Bengal, Buddhism and Hinduism seemed to have been equally popular. Again, if we believe the account of Fahien, Kashmir, Afghanistan and the Punjab were the strongholds of Buddhism even in that age of Brahmaṇism and without much royal patronage. The remains of architecture, sculpture and painting from Sanchi, Sarnath, Mathurā, Kauśāmbi, Pāhārpur, Ajantā, Nāgarajunikoṇḍā and Amarāvatī undoubtedly signify that the Gupta Age was the golden age of the Buddhist art. Epigraphic references of Buddhism found from Mathurā, Kauśāmbī, Sārnāth and Chasia testified to the importance of the above faith there. Even in that age special rest-house (Mahavihāra) was constructed by the Ceylonese pilgrims at Bodh-Gaya.[1] Moreover, Mrigaśikhavana in Bengal became another flourishing centre of Buddhist religion and culture. The Buddhist chaityas, caves, temples and monasteries at Bhaja, Kuda, Mahar, Bedsa, Junnar and Kanheri and the memorable paintings at the Buddhist caves of Ajantā were being patronised not only by the aristocracy but also by guilds and corporations, artisans and business magnates.

The Mahāyāna cult of Buddhism became gradually popular and the image worship of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas, the growth of the Buddhist pantheon, the ceremonial solemnities and religious processions were some of the salient features of Buddhism of the Age. The magnificent Stūpas and Chaityas were built everywhere and the Buddhist establishment were adorned with artistic paintings and sculptures depicting the life and thought of the Buddha.

The reason behind the everlasting character of Buddhism is rightly expressed by Prof. Edward Conze. He states, "However eloquent the sages may be on this issue, commonsense cannot help feeling that this kind of unworldliness is all very well and noble, but certainly quite unsuitable for anyone who has to live in this world and on this earth. We are all of us now a days

[1]Fleet, *CII*, III.

unconscious Darwinians, and the survival value of an unworldly doctrine seems to be fearfully small. How could it ever keep its footing on the earth ? Historical facts, however, are rather disconcerting to commonsense. The Buddhist community is the oldest institution of mankind. It has survived longer than any other institution, except the kindred sect of the Jains. Here you have the big bullying empires of history, guarded by hosts of soldiers, ships and magistrates. Scarcely one of them lasted longer than perhaps three centuries. There you have a movement of deliberate beggars, who always prized poverty more than wealth; who were sworn not to harm or kill other beings; who spent their time in dreaming superb dreams, and inventing beautiful never-never-lands; who despised whatever the world valued; who valued whatever the world despises meekness, generosity, idle contemplation. And yet, where these mighty empires, built on greed, hatred, and delusion, lasted just to a few centuries, the impulse of self-denial carried the Buddhist community through 2,500 years.

"I suppose that quite a number of conclusions could be drawn from this fact. The one which I would like to point out is that Darwinism, and the other philosophies behind the big empires are very shallow; they have their day—it is really a very short day, and not a very restful one while it lasts. Whereas the great and universal wisdom tradition of mankind goes deep down to the very roots, the very breath and rhythm of life. It is the meek that will inherit the earth, it is the meek that have inherited the earth—because they alone are willing to live in contact with it. The Chinese philosopher Laotse expressed this very beautifully in the Tao-te-king (Chapter 7).

"Heaven is lasting and earth enduring.
The reason why they are lasting and enduring is that they do not live for themselves;
Therefore, they live long.
In the same way the Sage keeps himself behind and he is in the front ;
He forgets himself and he is preserved.
It is not because he is not self-interested
That his self-interest is established?"[1]

[1]Conze, Edward, *Buddhism: its Essence and Development.*

Jainism

Just like the Buddhists, the Jainas also made a lasting contribution to the history and civilization of the Indian sub-continent. Pundravardhan, Mathurā, Valabhī, Udayagiri, Kamatak, Kañchī and Mysore became the centres of Jainism in the Classical Age. It received royal patronage from the Gaṅga, Kadamba, Pallava and Pāṇḍya rulers of the contemporary period. In 453 AD a council was held at Valabhī to collect and to correct the existing texts of the Jaina scriptures and a good number of commentaries were written on them. They were written in Sanskrit instead of Prākrit; and side by side with Śaivism the southern part of India gradually became the stronghold of Jainism.

General Outlook

However, there is nothing on record to show that the revival of Brahmaṇism in the Classical Age was accompanied by the persecution of other sects so characteristic of the early history of modern Europe. On the other hand, the epigraphic records of this period belong to diverse creeds and these point out clearly the catholicity of mind and the tolerant policy of the Gupta rulers. Side by side with Vaishṇavism, Śaivism, the Sun worship, Buddhism and Jainism flourished, though the popularity of one at a specific time might have varied with that of another. The Gupta kings recruited their officials strictly on the basis of talents irrespective of their religious convictions. It is recorded in the Udayagiri cave inscription of Chandragupta II that his minister of war and peace was an ardent follower of Śiva.[2]

We learn from the Chinese pilgrim I-Tsing (*c*-671-695 AD) that Śrī-Gupta, the founder of the Gupta dynasty of Magadha, built a Buddhist temple at Mṛigasikhāvana (Mi-li-kia-si-Kia-pono).[2] Similarly, Samudragupta granted permission to a Ceylonese king Meghavarna to construct a monastery (Mahāvihāra) at Bodh-Gaya for the Ceylonese pilgrims.[3] He also donated some villages for its maintenance.

[1]Fleet, *CII*, III.
[2]Raychaudhuri, *PHAI*.
[3]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 1.

The Gupta kings recruited their officials on the basis of talents irrespective of their religious convictions. It is thus recorded in the Udayagiri cave inscription of Chandragupta II that his minister, Virasena Sāba was an ardent follower of Śiva.[1] His another official, Amrakārdava permanently deposited twenty-five denāras (gold coins) with a guild and out of interest of the deposited sum apparently the guild would take the responsibility of feeding five Bhikshus and also supply oil for lighting a lamp in the jewel-house where the sacred remains of Buddha was deposited. For the maintenace of that monastery at Kāka-nādaboṭa, a village (or a part of it) called Īśravāsaka was donated free of all taxes and immunities to the monastery.[2] Again, after receiving due patronage from Kumāragupta I, Bhikshu Buddhamitra has installed an image of Buddha in 448 AD.[3] He was a follower of Karttikeya and Vishṇu. His son Skandagupta was also a devotee of Vishṇu, Śiva and Karttikeya (Skand), and like his father he also encouraged Sun worship in his domain.[4] On the whole, in the Gupta period different religious sects lived side by side in peace and amity and that the rulers of this Imperial dynasty followed an extraordinarily tolerant policy towards all of them and helped their growth and development in every possible way. The Gupta period enjoyed no small amount of culture and mental broadness and that there was no 'Thirty-years' War' as in the seventeenth century Europe to establish religious peace and amity in the Indian sub-continent.

As Professor E. B. Havell rightly points out, "It is rather difficult for Europeans, bearing in mind the religious history of Europe, to understand that sectarian differences have never had quite the same significance in India as that which commonly obtains in Europe. It would hardly occur to an Indian who is a devotee of Vishṇu to believe that his neighbour, who worships Śiva, is on that account a heretic and doomed to everlasting perdition. Vishṇu is to him that aspect of the One Supreme

[1]*Ibid*, p. 34.
[2]Sanchi Stone Inscription of Ch. II : *Ibid*, p. 29.
[3]Mankuwar stone image ins. of Kumāragupta I : *Ibid*, p. 45.
[4]Mandasore ins. of Kumāragupta and Bandhuvarman. Bihar stone pillars inscription, Bhitari Stone pillars inscription, Indore copper-plate, etc. *Ibid*, pp. 47, 52, 60, 79.

which is most favourable for himself, his family, his caste, or his race: therefore for his worldly and spiritual advantage he will concentrate his thoughts upon that aspect. Vishṇu for him becomes also Śiva, Brahmā, and Parameshwar—the Lord of All; but he will not quarrel with his neighbour because he wishes to ascribe all the powers of the Supreme Deity to Śiva, on any other aspect of the one.

"Sectarian disputes, culminating to bloodshed, rapine and torture, these have been in India times enough; but their origin has been more often connected with rights of property, political jealousies, or racial animosities than with differences of religious dogma. The description given by Chinese travellers of the fifth and seventh centuries AD, of crowds of Indian devotees of different sects meeting together in the same place, and of Indian universities attended by scores of professors representing as many different schools of philosophy and religion is illustrative of the tolerance of Indian thought in matters of belief. Indian has always taught that Truth is absolute, but there are many ways of realising it."[1]

[1]Havell E. B., *The Art Heritage of India*, p. 128.

CHAPTER VII

EDUCATION

India had a very old tradition of literature, culture and education. The Vedic poems were composed by the inspired sages *(Ṛishis)* as early as the fifteenth to the sixteenth century BC.[1] The Vedas consist of sacred hymns and historical poems and ballads; and later on, the new branches of learning, such as, metaphysics (Upanishads), mathematics and natural sciences enriched the field of Vedic education.

At first there was no restriction on the teaching and learning of the Vedas by the warriors and others. But later the priestly class (the Brāhmaṇas) claimed that the sacred literature was the spoken word of God, and in the absence of written books, only the select few were competent to pass it on without distortion. Thus, with the rigidity of the caste system, the Brāhmaṇas became the only teachers not only of the Vedic subjects but also of the non-Vedic studies preparing for military and commercial careers.

The scope of our present study is rather limited and we like to confine ourselves to the above subject from *cir* 300 AD to 600 AD. For its source materials, we have to depend on the Epics, Purāṇas, Dharmaśāstras, literary works and foreign accounts.

To understand the historical perspective of the early Indian education, we have to trace it from the Indus Valley age. The semi-pictographic writings on the numerous seals from Mohen-jo-daro and Harappā undoubtedly indicate the literacy of the makers of that civilization and their knowledge about reading and writing.[2] But we do not know practically anything about

[1]Renou, Louis, *Vedic India*, p. 10.

[2]Wheeler, Mortimer, *The Cambridge History of India*, Supplementary Volume, *The Indus Civilisation.*

their system of education.

A regular system of education was, however, introduced by the early Vedic Indians; the Vedas and other subjects were orally instructed by the teachers to their students.[1] The student-life generally started at the commencement of the Upanayana ceremony and ended with that of the convocation. The courses of study commenced from the very beginning of the rainy season. Most noteworthy feature of education was that it started from the religious background and individual teacher *(Guru)* was responsible for imparting education. Thus, every Āśrama of a Ṛishi was a residential school. Several branches of studies were also cultivated. Eight different schools are referred to in the Pūraṇas,[2] *viz.*, (i) *Agnisthāna* (place of fire-worship), (ii) *Brahmasthāna* (place of Vedic learning), (iii) *Vishṇusthāna* (place of learning polity, economics and information), (iv) *Mahendrasthāna* (place for learning art of warfare), (v) *Vivasva-sthāna* (astrology), (vi) *Somasthāna (Botany)*, (vii) *Garuḍa-sthana* (place for learning transport and other communication), and (viii) *Kārttikeyasthāna* (place for learning the parade of soldiers and the art of warfare). It, thus, shows that the field of education had been gradually extended in such a way that it was quite impossible for a single individual to acquire mastery over too many subjects. The scope for specialization became evident.

In course of time early Indian society gradually centred round the so-called four castes and the lot of untouchables. Consequently education became caste based, a development that had taken place in the Later Vedic and the Epic periods. The Kshatriyas (the warrior caste) were expected to devote their sole attention to learning the art of warfare and the science of government. They did not bother about Vedic and Purāṇic studies. They were only satisfied with their knowledge of the "Three R's". But the duty of the Brāhmaṇas was to study and teach, to sacrifice, and to give and receive gifts. Like the Kshatriyas, the Vaiśyas had some general knowledge; but their chief function was to breed cattle, till the earth, pursue trade and to lend money. The duty of the Śudras was to serve the three upper

[1] *RV*, VII, 103.

[2] Mookerji, R. K., *Ancient Indian Education (Brahmaṇical and Buddhism)*.

classes,[1] and their education was fashioned in that way. There were also a lot of untouchables and out-castes in the society and they were not expected to receive any education. Despite caste restrictions the relationship between the tutor and the taught was mostly cordial and this was a salient feature of the residential system of education in a teacher's (*Guru*) house in ancient India. Side by side with this system, there were some famous educational institutes in Taxila, Banaras and Kāñchi in the south; Ujjaini became another centre in the later period. The great grammarian Pāṇini, Kauṭilya (alias Chāṇakya) and Charaka were alumni of the Taxila University.

Simultaneously with Buddhism and Jainism, each monastery (Vihāra) became a centre of learning and education. Their instruction included 'giving of recitation, holding examination, making exhortation, and explaining Dhamma.'[2] There was also scope for specialisation in different branches of the Buddhist and Jaina canons. Besides helping the spread of religious education in India, the monasteries often sent their teachers to the foreign countries. During the second, third and fourth centuries of the Christian era the foreign monks who came to China devoted most of their time to the translation of Buddhist canons. At least twenty-five Indian monks were engaged in this work before the time of Fa-hien, and such scholars made an important contribution to the cultural exchange between India and China. From the beginning of the second down the end of the fourth century AD, according to existing records, more than two hundred monks came to China from the Buddhist countries to translate Buddhist sutras.[3] The most famous among the seat of learning in India was the Buddhist monastery at Nālandā. It was founded by the patronage of the Imperial Guptas[4] and it became the most flourishing university under the fostering care of Harshavardhana, until it was pillaged by the Muslim invaders in the Middle Ages.

Teacher-Student Relation

As stated in the Smṛties and other literature, the student-

[1]*Manusmṛti*, i, 88.
[2]*Chullvagga* (of Vinaya Piṭaka), VIII, 7, 4.
[3]Legge, *Records of the Buddhistic Kingdom*, p. 6.
[4]Basham, A. L., *The Wonder that was India*, p. 164.

teacher relationship was always cordial. The Chinese pilgrim, I-Tsing in the seventh century AD noticed the same feeling; and the same spirit was maintained even in the Tols, Maktabs and Madrāsās in the much later period. The relation between the teacher and the taught was just like a father and a son. In order to keep up that spirit Yājñavalkya[1] recommends that the student must be grateful, not inclined to hate or prove false to his teacher, happy and not disposed to find fault. They should always be dependent and under the control of their teachers. It is, further, supplemented by Nārada[2] who states that the students should stay only with their teachers. The Smṛitis,[3] at the same time, recommend that just like the sons, the disobedient students must be punished physically. In such cases, the teacher might refuse food to them. Nārada adds that the beating should be on the back only and never on the head or on the chest, and it should not be excessive.[4] The student-teacher relationship is further explained by the Chinese pilgrim I-Tsing,[5] who states that the pupil served his teacher by folding his clothes, sweeping the apartment and the yard, providing drinking water and nursing him in his illness. On his part the teacher not only taught him but also took care of his physical and mental health and in his illness he served him like his father. Throughout his student life in the house of a teacher, a student was expected to lead the life of a Brahmachāri, and pay due homage and respect to his teacher *(Guru)* and other superior members of the latter's household.[6] Sārangarav, Sāradvanta and Kautsa are praised for their obedience to their teacher and their hospitality, which was regarded as an important virtue.[7] Disciples carried the seats (a tiger's skin or a black buck's skin). In most cases the respectful service of the student was considered as fees of teacher; but in

[1] *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, I, 28.

[2] *Nāradasmṛti*, VIII, 8-9.

[3] *Āpsatmba Dharmasutra*, I, 2, 8, 29-30; *Gautama Dharmasutra*, II, 13, 14, 18, 19, 22, 23, 25; 48-50, *Vishṇusmṛti*, Ch. XXVIII, 5-22, 71, 81-82; *Sankhasutra*, III, 12.

[4] *Naradasmṛti*, VIII, 13-14.

[5] Takakasu, J.A., *A Record of the Buddhistic Religion as Practised in India and the Malay Archipelago*, pp. 117-120.

[6] *Sankhasutra*, III, 12; *Vishṇusmṛti*, XXVIII, II, 5, 13, 14; *Nāradasmṛti*, VIII, 8.

[7] *Śaka*, I, 74, 78.

some cases the teachers charged fees from their students.[1] According to Kālidāsa, knowledge imparted to a good pupil does not cause repentance;[2] and an art imparted to a deserving pupil improves itself.[3] The teaching of the dullard sharpens the intellect of the teacher.[4] Finally Ganadāsa says that instruction is good only when it stands the test in the presence of wise men, as gold is tested by means of fire;[5] and also that knowledge is to be esteemed for its own sake.[6] He is also a trader in learning who uses it only for earning his bread.

Some Centres of Study

Between *cir.* 300 AD and 600 AD quite a large number of Indian religious teachers went to China.[7] Besides their religious preaching, they translated a good number of Buddhist texts into the Chinese language. They hailed from Kashmir, Udyāna, Gandhāra, Ujjainī, Benaras and from other parts of India.[8] These places were, thus, the centres of Buddhistic and Sanskritic learning.

As we have already noted, every Buddhist and Jaina monastery (Vihāra) was a centre of religious as well as secular learning and culture. Here, we can refer to the account of the famous Chinese pilgrim, Fa-hien, who has given a long list of monasteries which were apparently centres of religious and secular education. Udyāna, Suvastu, Gandhāra, Takshashila, Purushpura, Nagarahāra, Mathurā, Samkāsya, Kānyakubja, Kośala, Jetavana-vihāra, Kapilāvāstu, Rāmagrāma, Kushinagara, Vaiśālī, Pāṭaliputra, Rājagṛiha, Gayā, Vārānasī, Kauśambī, Champā and Tāmralipta were most famous among them.[9] Fa-hien visited India during the reign of Chandra Gupta II; but the famous monastery at Nālandā, which he has not mentioned, was established by the patronage of the later Imperial Gupta. Buddha-

[1] *Manusmṛti*, ii, 140; *Sankha Saṁhita*, III, I.
[2] *Śaka*, IV, 46.
[3] *Mālavikāgnimitra*, I, 35.
[4] *Ibid*, I, 113.
[5] *Ibid*, II, 28.
[6] *Ibid*, 1, 116.
[7] Mookerji, *Ancient Indian Education (Brahmaṇical and Buddhism)*, pp. 602-606.
[8] *Ibid.*
[9] Legge, *Records of the Buddhistic Kingdoms*, pp. 15-77.

gupta, Tathāgatagupta, Narasinhagupta Bālāditya and others were its patrons. According to tradition recorded by Tārānath, Nālandā was the birth place of Sāriputta whose *Chaitya* was seen by Aśoka; Nālandā gradually became famous after the rise of the Mahāyāna system of Buddhism.[1] By the end of the fourth century AD the popularity of Nālandā-Mahāvihāra as a centre of religious education and culture reached far and wide and Nālandā attracted scholars from different parts of India and abroad. Āchārya Nāgārjuna and his pupil Ārya Deva from the South had been at Nālandā for a long time. Their contemporary Suviṣṇu erected "108 temples for conservation of Abhidharma" Piṭaka. At about 400 AD the famous Buddhist Logician, Diṅnāga was invited by the university to a polemical discussion with Brāhmaṇa Sudurjaya and his associates.[2] Gradually, Nālandā became famous for its magnificent establishment and its manifold intellectual and vocational training. According to the Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen-Tsāng,[3] in the later period Sakraditya, his son Buddhagupta, his successor Tathāgatagupta, his successor Bālāditya, his son Vajra and others were the early Imperial patrons of this great centre of learning and because of their substantial help and support, Nālandā became an attractive residential university.

In the opinion of Hiuen-Tsang[4] the University of Taxilā was noted for its school of medicine, that of Ujjain for astronomy and that of Benaras for orthodox Brāhmaṇical learning. But the greatest and the most celebrated of all these universities was Nālandā, the 'Oxford' of the ancient Indian sub-continent. Although it was a great centre of Buddhist learning, its comprehensive course of study included, the Vedas, Vedāṅgas, philosophy, grammar, Sabda-vidyā, Hetu-vidyā, Yoga-śāstra, Logic, Upanishad, Mīmāṁsā, Dharmaśāstras, Itihāsa-Purāṇas, Medicine, Mathematics, the so-called sixty-four arts, etc. Here, the standard of education was very high and applications for admission had to pass a very stiff oral test. Although many students

[1]Mookerji, *Ancient Indian Education (Brahmaṇical and Buddhism)*, p. 557.

[2]*JASB*, *NS*, I, p. 227; Vide, *Ancient Indian Education (Brahmaṇical and Buddhism)*, p. 558.

[3]Watters, *Yuan Chwang*, II, pp. 164-65; *EI*, XX, p. 43.

[4]*Ibid*, I, pp. 160-171.

came from abroad, very few of them could qualify themselves for admission to advanced courses of study. Very strict discipline was enforced and any student could be expelled for indiscipline or irregular conduct. Hiuen-Tsang himself was a student of this University for five years, learning different branches of knowledge, specially the Mahāyāna doctrines and philosophy. During his stay there were ten thousand students (or brethren) at Nālandā of whom one thousand were proficient in the ten works of the Śūtras and Śāstras; five hundred in thirty works, ten only, including Hiuen-Tsang himself, in fifty works. Śīlabhadra, a master of every work, was the head of the university. Other famous teachers of this institute were Jñānachandra, Dharmapāla, Chandrapāla, Gunamatī, Sthiramatī, Prabhamitra and Jīnamitra. The students passed 'day and night' in study and discussion, 'juniors and seniors mutually helping to perfection.' Lectures on various topics were delivered to them from about 100 pulpits every day, and these were so important that the students did not miss them "even for a minute." The name and fame of the Nālandā Mahavihāra had attained such proportions that "those who stole the name (of Nālandā Brother) were all treated with respect wherever they went."[1] In this residential university all the students enjoyed free board and lodging and no tuition fee was charged.

In the post-Gupta period, Harṣavardhana became its great patron. He spent a fourth of the revenue from the crown lands for rewarding great scholars. At Nālandā, by the side of the main building of the university, he erected another hundred feet high magnificent house and dedicated it to the university. He also "remitted the revenues of about 100 villages" for supplying clothes, food, bedding and medicine to the resident student.[2]

Ujjaini was another great centre of learning and Brāhmaṇical culture. It was, perhaps, the home of the great poet Kālidāsa who was believed to be the Court poet of Chandragupta II Vikramāditya. After the Śaka war Chandragupta II took a keen interest in the all-round development of this ancient city and he was also proud of assuming the title of "Ujjaini-Puravara-Adhīśvara." Another great centre of learning and culture was

[1]Watters, *Yuan Chwang*, I, pp. 160-171.
[2]*Ibid.*

Valabhi Mahāvihāra. Princess Duḍḍā, a daughter of the sister of Dhruva I, had erected a vihāra there; and subsequently (580 AD) another vihāra was constructed by King Dharasena I.[1] Through royal favour the Valabhī Mahāvīhara was equipped with good library. Both I-Tsing and Hiuen-Tsang spoke very highly of its teachers and its system of teaching.

Education and Educators

The literary account of Kālidāsa and others speak very highly of the education and literary accomplishments of the royal princes. In the Allahabad stone-pillar inscription, Samudragupta is eulogised as a "King of poets (Kavirāja)."[2] Moreover, if we believe that Chandragupta II was no other than the legendary Vikramāditya whose court was adorned by "the nine gems" including Kālidāsa, there is no doubt that Chandragupta II himself was a man of education and culture. Similarly, the Vākāṭaka King Pravarsena II is believed to have composed *Setubandha-Kāvya* in Mahārāshtrī prākrit.[3] In the later periods also many of the kings and princes were good writers and poets. For instance, Harshavardhana wrote *Nāgananda*, *Priyadarśikā* and *Ratnāvalī*.

The princess of the royal families and the daughters of nobles were not slow to imbibe the education and culture of the day. As painted in the literary texts, they were also proficient in the art of reading, writing, singing, dancing and various other arts. Mālavikā of Kālidāsa's *Mālavikā-Agnimitra* was well-trained in the art of singing and dancing,[4] and the wife of the exiled Yaksha of *Meghaduta* was a good lute player.[5]

Literary evidence suggests that educated men and women even spoke Sanskrit very well. We find the kings, ministers, high officials, hermits, generals, *kanchukis*, heralds, charioteers, stage-managers (or sutra-dharas), actors and dancing-masters conversing in Sanskrit. A disciple, who had not made much progress in his studies, would converse in Prākrit.[6] On the other

[1]The Grant of King Guhasena of Valabhi, *IA*, IV, p. 174.
[2]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 1.
[3]Majumdar & Pusalker, *The Classical Age*, p. 182.
[4]*Mālavikāgnimitra*, II.
[5]*Meghaduta*, I, 23.
[6]*Abhijñānaśakuntala*—Prelude to Act III.

hand, we find in *Śakuntalā* and in the other works of Kālidāsa, Vidushakas, the gate-keepers, the king's brother-in-law (who is the chief police-officer), the constable, the fisherman, the children and women speaking Prākrit. Those who used Prākrit could, however, follow conversation in Sanskrit. Priyamvadā could even get a Sanskrit śloka by heart.[1] Even ladies like Kausiki were highly educated and spoke Sanskrit. The Vidushaka gives her the epithet "Pandita."[2] She is not only learned but also a tactful lady. Even the king and the chief queen used to seek her advice.

Kausiki is a good critic of dancing and music. She points out that the science or theory of singing, dancing and acting depends mainly on its application.[3] Praising Mālavikā's dancing she comments that her gesture and postures are highly expressive, the movements of her feet are harmonious and that the sentiment she wants to convey, engrosses her completely. Kausiki is also acquainted with the art of medicine.[4] Her theory of education is also interesting. She says that there are some teachers who, highly learned themselves, are incapable of imparting their knowledge to their pupils. Again, there are others who though not very learned are highly efficient in communicating their learning to their pupils. But he who possesses great learning and capacity for instruction is to be esteemed most among all teachers.[5]

In the Classical Age, the ladies of the royal household received their education and culture in every possible way. Besides, general education they had to learn various arts for which experts were brought from other parts of the country.

The prevalence of early marriage in society adversely affected women's education in general. Vātsyayana, however, recommends that the princesses and the daughters of noble families should have knowledge in Kāmasūtra and in other sixty-four arts (kalās); and the house-wife must have fair knowledge of the family budget and daily expenses.[6] Literary evidence suggests

[1] *Abhijñanaśākuntala*, IV, 50.
[2] *Mālavikāgnimitra*, V, 18.
[3] *Ibid*, I, 99.
[4] *Ibid*, IV, 49 (such type of references, *Raghuvaṁsa*, I, 23.)
[5] *Ibid*, I, 112.
[6] *Kāmasūtra*, I, 3, 12, 16; IV, 1, 32.

that ladies of aristocratic families and even the hermit girls knew the art of reading and could write poems, letters and had sufficient knowledge of the Epics, Purāṇas and the Dharmaśāstras. Śakuntalā was an adept in the art of composing letters to her lover, Dushmanta[1] and her friend Anasuyā and Priyamvadā knew history (Itihāsa), drawing and painting.[2] There are numerous such references in our Sanskrit literature attesting to the accomplishments of women in ancient India.

Regarding other educators of this period, we have good literary and epigraphic evidences. Harisena, the minister of war and peace of Samudragupta, composed the famous Allahabad Praśasti,[3] which is also a very good piece of literature. The Mandasor inscription of Kumāragupta I and Bandhuvarman, written by Vatsabhaṭṭi, is regarded as another place of literary creation. Thus, from a good number of the Gupta inscriptions, we can conclude that the art of prose writing and the kāvya style had already reached maturity in the hands of the panegyrists of that age. The legends on the coins also were written in rythmical style.[4]

In the seventh century Hiuen-Tsang was impressed by a class of wandering *bhikshus* (religious beggars) who accumulated wisdom in course of their constant travel. Possessed of a deep-rooted religious education, they could not be tempted to forsake the path of knowledge even by the lavish gifts and honours of kings and princes. However, in this period, the hey-day of the Buddhist and Jaina monasteries, excepting Nālandā Mahāvihāra and a few others, was slowly passing away. It was gradually supplanted by a revival of the age of the old Brāhmaṇical education and culture. In course of time the caste system became more and more rigid. Education became gradually restricted mainly to the Brāhmaṇical and other higher classes of the population. There were the Śudras, other outcastes born of inter-marriages and the violation of strict Brāhmaṇical discipline and the lot of untouchables and tribal people who were completely debarred from education other than their own

[1] *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, I.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] Fleet, p. 1.
[4] Ref., J. Allan, *Gupta Coins*; A.S. Altekar, *Corpus of Ancient Indian Coins*, Vol., III, Gupta Gold Coins of Bayana Hoard.

professional one. Moreover, the practice of child marriage adversely affected female education. Although education came to be restricted to a certain class of people, the great Brāhmaṇical education and culture remained uninterrupted throughout the ages despite foreign invasions of the later periods.

CHAPTER VIII

LANGUAGE, LITERATURE, SCRIPTS, SCIENTIFIC AND OTHER CULTURAL ACHIEVEMENTS

The Gupta age was marked by a vigorous outburst of Sanskrit literature. The brilliancy of the art and literature of the period has led to scholars to compare it with that of the Periclean age of Athens and Elizabethan age of England.[1] Thus, with the rise of the Gupta empire, the progress of Sanskrit acquired an additional momentum all over the country. The Gupta emperors were so zealous admirers and liberal patrons of Sanskrit language and literature that they are said to have enjoyed its use even in their palaces and harems. They made Sanskrit the official language and all their epigraphic records written in Sanskrit. In coin legends and scriptures Prākrit was replaced by Sanskrit. This encouragement resulted in a great and all-round development of Sanskrit language and literature; and consequently this age witnessed some of the finest products in the whole range of Sanskrit literature. Thus, this period is rightly called the Golden Age of Sanskrit language and literature.

The brilliant literary achievements of this age have led the scholars to think that there was a *renaissance* of Sanskrit literature under the Imperial Guptas. Max Müller has, thus, expounded the theory that Sanskrit literature was in a state of abeyance during the post-Aśokan and Pre-Gupta period.[2] According to him, due to the incessant invasions of foreigners like the Greeks, Śakas, Parthians, Kushanas and others the Sanskrit literature was practically eclipsed, and it was only under

[1]Smith, *EI*.
[2]Allan, *BMCGD*; Altekar, *Coinage*; Altekar, *CGC*.

the patronage of the Gupta Kings that there was a revival of Sanskrit literature. Once this '*renaissance* theory' of Max Müller was very much appreciated by the intellectuals. But further researches have proved that this remark is somewhat misleading. According to Bühler, Fleet and other scholars, Sanskrit literature never went out of existence from India. Again, the term '*renaissance*' or revival implies that cultivation of Sanskrit literature absolutely went out of existence or eclipsed, but that was never the case. Indologists have also pointed out that the foreigners like Śakas, Kushanas, and others after having conquered some parts of India, Indianised themselves and greatly patronised Indian literature, art and architecture. The enlightened rulers like Kanishka I, Rudradaman I and others immensely encouraged the development of Sanskrit literature. Moreover, they conquered only some parts of India. A large portion remained free from their control. Thus, it is not correct to say that the cultivation of Sanskrit literature completely disappeared from India.

On the other hand, the attraction of Sanskrit literature was so strong for its richness of vocabulary, compactness of forms, expressiveness of idioms, that even in the Second Century AD a foreign ruler like Mahakshatrapa Rudradaman II began to spend his leisure hours in its cultivation. In his Junagarh Rock inscription[1] it has been recorded that he was a master in ornate prose and kävya style. Even the Buddhists accepted Sanskrit for their sacred canon more than a century before the rise of the Gupta empire. The *Jataka stories* of Arya Sura,[2] and *Lalita-Vistara*[3] show that the Buddhists also cultivated Sanskrit literature before the advent of the Gupta age.

Employment of ornate prose and poetry in Gupta epigraphs[4] undoubtedly indicates that the cultivation of Sanskrit literature was not completely wiped out from our country. The works of Kālidāsa impress us for their freedom from immaturity, but this

[1]*EI*, VIII, p. 44.

[2]Speyer, J. S., *Jātaka Māla of Ārya Śura*, English translation.

[3]Ed. by Rajendralal Mitra.

[4]Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta, Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 6; Mandasor Stone inscription of Kumäragupta I and Bandhuvarman, Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 81. Junagarh Rock Inscription of Samudragupta, Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 58.

freedom must have been the result of prolonged and diverse efforts extending over a stretch of time. Thus, at the present state of our knowledge it is difficult to accept the 'renaissance theory' of Max Müller.

The Gupta literature may be classified into two groups—religious and secular literature. Regarding religious literature it may be said that this period saw the full development of the Purāṇas which were in existence in India as early as the later Vedic period. Early in the Gupta period the custodians of the Purāṇas made them up-to-date by bringing the dynasties of the Kali age down to AD 350.

The Purāṇas

The term Purāṇa (lit. old, ancient) occurs in the Atharvaveda and the Brāhmaṇas in the sense of cosmogonic enquiries. In the *Mahābhārata,* it is used to designate ancient legendary lore. There are 18 major Purāṇas (Mahāpurāṇas), *viz.,* Matsya, Mārkandeya, Bhavishya, Bhagavata, Brahma, Brahmāndas, Brahmavaivarta, Vāyu, Vāmana, Vishnu, Varāha, Agni, Nārada, Padma, Linga, Varuṇa, Kūrma and Skanda. There are also minor Purāṇas (Upa-Purāṇas) which are Kalki, Kalika, Samba, Siva, Vishṇu, Dharmottara, Vrihat-dharma, Vrihat-Nārādiya, Narasiṁha, Chaṇḍī, etc.[1]

The subject-matter of the Purāṇas is very interesting. Cosmogony, deeds of numerous gods and goddesses, saints *(Ṛishis)* heroes and ancestors of the human race, beginning of the famous royal families, veiled history, geography, flora and fauna, ritualistic and sectarian worship, and some philosophical speculation, most of which is sectarian in character, are clearly expressed in different Purāṇas.[2] These are considerable sections on rights and duties of different castes and aśramas (stages of life) as well as general Brahmaṇical rites, such as, Vratas, vows and ceremonies in honour of Vishṇu, Śiva, Linga, Indra, Agni, Durga, Ganeśa, Lakshmi, Sarasvati, Savitri, Krișṇa, Radha, etc.

The Purāṇic literature has almost encyclopaedic character; but they are written in careless language, indifferent versifica-

[1]Winternitz, M., *History of Indian Literature,* I; Dasgupta, S.N. and De, S K., *History of Sanskrit Literature,* I.

[2]Winternitz, *HIL,* pp. 576-77.

tion, faulty grammar, inaccurate metres, medley of contents, sometimes contradictory and bondless exaggeration. Much other material is placed by the side of the new inferior matter; absurd tales and confused legends are also incorporated with them.[1] Perhaps, sectarian and semi-literate priests are responsible for their composition. However, they serve as a compendium of all existing knowledge about religion, philosophy, ritual, legends, tales, history, geography, flora and fauna. Inspite of its many shortcomings, remarkable scientific insights are also found buried in these heterogenous literary compounds. Rejecting the popular geocentric theory, *Vishṇu Purāṇa* affirms the view that the earth is the centre of the solar system. The movement of the planets is stated to impart a motion to the pivotal sun.[2] The Purāṇas also affirm the status of art and literature. According to *Vishṇu Purāṇa*, "Poetry and all literary creations, as also music, are but aspects of the Lord in His form as Sound."[3] Similarly, the *Agni Purāṇa* states, "If Śāstra (Science), Itihāsa (history) and popular culture all three combine, it becomes a Kāvya (literary creation)."[4] It also has given a good analysis of the psychology of aesthetic creation and experience.[5]

Buddhist and Jaina Literature

The tradition of massive tales, fables and parables held the growth of later Buddhist literature. The earlier Buddhist works are in Pāli, but in the later phase Sanskrit came to be used to a greater extent and most of the works are in prose with verse passages in mixed Sanskrit. For their material they drew heavily on the legends that had already taken form in Pāli.

Nāgārjuna was the founder of the Mādhyamika school of philosophy. Ārya Deva and Ārya Āsanga are the two most notable writers of this school. The first regular Buddhist work on Logic was written by Vasubandhu (fifth century AD), the younger brother of Ārya Āsanga. Vasubandhu's disciple Dinnāga was a forceful controversialist who is said to have converted

[1]Speyer, *Jātaka Māla of Ārya Śura*, English translation.
[2]Wilson, *Vishṇu Purāṇa*, II, Ch. 8. 13-16; Ch. 12, 26-27.
[3]*Ibid*, I. 22, 48.
[4]*Agni Purāṇa*, Ch. 319, 1-11 (Anandāśram ed.), English translation by M.N. Dutta), 411.
[5]*Ibid.*

many Tirtha controversialists at Nālandā. His learned works are *Abhidharmakośa*, *Abhidharmasamuchchaya* and *Triṁśikā*. His disciple Dinnāga had maintained the tradition of his teacher.

The *Avalokiteśvara Guna Karanda Vyuha* and *Sukhavati Vyuha* may be placed in the fourth to fifth century AD. In these works later concept of the Buddhist paradise presided over by Avalokiteśvara (or Amitāva Buddha) has taken shape. The visualization of Sukhavatī or the blessed realm is very concrete. Delightful rivers yield pleasant, sweet water and the rippling of the water is the most glorious music. Jewel trees with many coloured blossoms grow there and land is filled with a sweet fragrance.

The Jaina canonical literature at first grew up in Prākrit dialects like Māgadhī and Mahārāṣtrī, but Sanskrit came to be the medium later. Within a short time, Jainism has produced many great scholars; by their efforts the Hindu Itihāsas and Purāṇas were recast in Jaina versions to popularise their doctrines. Vimala had produced a Jaina version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in Jaina Mahārāṣtrī. Moreover, Devardhi Gani codified the teachings of Mahāvīra in a council at Valabhī. Siddhasena Divākara laid the foundation of logic among the Jainas by compiling the famous *Nyāyavarta* and *Sammati-tarka-Sūtra*. Another famous Jain poet and logician was Akalaṅka Deva who is remembered for his *Ashṭa-Śatī* a work on Jaina Philosophy and Logic.

Dharma Śāstras

The period also saw the last phase of the Smṛti literature; and thus the three legal and political texts, *viz. Kāmandakīya-Nītisāra*, *Nārada-Smṛti* and *Brihaspati-Smṛti* are believed to have taken the final shape during this period.[1] *Kāmandakīya-nītisāra* is a guide book for kings, for it mainly deals with the king's life, his duty and responsibility.[2] Moreover, to maintain the integrity of the Gupta empire a book like this was very much needed at that time.

There is much contention among scholars regarding the

[1]Maity, *ELGP*.
[2]*Ibid*.

dates of Nārada and Bṛhaspati. The orthodox school believes that Nārada and Bṛhaspati belong to the earlier period. But in these two treaties the authors mention that, as the Holy Manu enacts such and such laws for this or that purpose, they also hand down these injunctions. This point favours placing Nārada and Bṛhaspati in a later period than Manu. If the final compilation of Manu is placed in the first century of the Christian era or a little earlier, the compilation of Nārada and Bṛhaspati must have been effected from the second century AD to the fifth or sixth century AD. Moreover, they refer to dīnāras (gold coins) which were probably first imported into India by the Roman merchants of the first century AD. And naturally these coins took some time to become familiar to the Indian people to find mention in the law books and other texts. Moreover, after detailed examination of many Sanskrit texts, P.V. Kane, in his *History of Dharmaśastra* has placed these books from the third century AD to the fifth or sixth century AD.[1] Even if we accept the opinion of the orthodox school, the laws and regulations which were established a century earlier would be traditionally followed one or two centuries later. This is also confirmed by the fact that many of the laws of Nārada and Bṛhaspati are the same as those of Manu, Yājñavalkya, Vishṇu, Gautama and other earlier law-givers; and a good many others are mere elaborations of the laws of the former law-givers. Their style of writing is very lucid and in easy-flowing Sanskrit.

Epics and their Influence

Possibly, our two great epics, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, also got their final touchup and received their present shape during the Classical Age. They are finest pieces of Indian literature. The *Mahābhārata* is considered as the biggest of the world's epics.[2] It is a veritable treasure-house of Indian lore, both religious and secular. Both the epics describe in splendid language the various emotions and events. Apart from their historical and literary importance the two epics are the treasure-houses of all kinds of materials. They serve the purpose of manuals of law and morality. They represent to the people the

[1]Maity, *ELGP*.
[2]Winternitz, *HIL*, I.

high ideals of family life which have taken a firm root in Indian thought and tradition. The characters of the epics stand forth as a moral standard to the successive generations of the Indians. Rāma is still regarded as an ideal son, an ideal king; Sītā is still supposed as a model for Indian womanhood, in purity, love and affection. Lakshman is still looked up as an ideal brother. Similarly, Yudhisthira is considered as an embodiment of truthfulness; and Kṛshna is considered as an incarnation of god Vishṇu. In fact, for centuries Indians have been turning out in sorrow, in joy and in daily toil, to these two Epics for solace and inspiration.

Kālidāsa and others

The Gupta monarchs, being highly cultured, liberally patronised literature; and a good number of intellectual celebrities were also associated with them. Samudragupta himself had established his fame as the 'king of poets' (Kavi-rāja)[1] by his various poetical compositions. The most notable poet of his court was minister of war and peace, Harisena, who has composed the famous Allahabad Pillar inscription which is composed in ornate prose and poetry. It has been accepted as a very good specimen of literary art. Chandragupta II followed in the footsteps of his father and counted among his high minister a poet named Vīrasena Saba[2] who was a high official and a member of his court and is described as a great grammarian, politician and a poet but none of his works has come down to us. His son and successor Kumāragupta I was able to maintain the literary tradition of his family. The famous Mandasor inscription of Kumāragupta I and Bandhuvarman[3] was composed by Vatsabhaṭṭi in AD 437. It shows that "the high-flown Kāvya style was already in a mature state as early as the fourth or fifth century AD."[4] There is a strong impression that Vatsabhaṭṭi moulded his poem on the style and idiom of Kālidāsa.

[1]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 6.
[2]Sircar, *Select Ins.*, I, p. 272.
[3]Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 81.
[4]Majumdar and Pusalker, *The Classical Age*, p. 292.

Date of Kālidāsa

The reign of Chandragupta II is also very famous in the history of Sanskrit literature. It is traditionally believed that his court was graced and adorned by the celebrated 'Nava-Ratna' (nine gems), such as, Kālidāsa, Vetālabhaṭṭa, Kshapaṇaka, Varāhamihira, Ghaṭakarpara, Vararuchi, Dhanvantari, Amarasimha and Sank-ur. It is not certain whether all of them were contemporaries; but it is believed that Kālidāsa flourished about this time. Gawronski,[1] Hillebrandt,[2] Pathak,[3] Keith,[4] Winternitz,[5] Thomas[6] and others have discussed the date and birth place of Kālidāsa. It is, however, clear that he lived sometimes after the Śunga King Agnimitra,[7] who ruled about 150 BC and before AD 634, the date of Aihole inscription of Pulakesin II. His writer, Rabikīrti refers to Kālidāsa as a great poet. Moreover, style of the Sanskrit composition of Vatsabhaṭṭi, writer of the famous Mandasor inscription of Kumāragupta I, and Bandhuvarman of AD 473 has some close similarity with that of the writings of Kālidāsa. Like Samudragupta, the war horses of Raghu of his *Raghuvaṁśa* visited almost every part of India. It is, thus, popularly believed that Kālidāsa had graced the court of Chandragupta II, Vikramāditya who ruled from about AD 375 (or 380) to AD 414.

His Life

From the study of his works, it can be inferred that he was a pious Brahmin from Ujjain.[8] He had close acquaintance with the Vedas, Epics, Upanishads, Puraṇas, Saṅkhya, Yoga, Vedānta, Mīmāṁsā, Nyaya, politics, medicine, astronomy and other sciences. But as for his personal life numerous legends have gathered round him which have no historical value.[9] From his

[1] *The Digvijaya of Raghuvaṁśa*, Krakau, 1915.
[2] *Kālidāsa*, Breslau, 1921.
[3] *Journal of the Bombay Royal Asiatic Society*, XIX, 1895.
[4] *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, 1901, p. 578; 1905, p. 575; 1909, p. 433.
[5] Winternitz, *HIL*, III, p. 40.
[6] Ref. *Mālavikāgnimitra.*
[7] *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, 1918, p. 118.
[8] Majumdar and Pusalker, *The Classical Age*, p. 303.
[9] *Ibid.*

works it is clear that he lived in an age of polished elegance and leisure, was greatly attached to the arts of songs and dance, drawing and painting. He had travelled widely in India and seems to have been familiar with the topography of the country from the Himalayas to Kanyākumārikā and from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea. He was always sensitive to beauty in nature and human life.

He is a great representative of our spirit, grace and genius. He is famous for suggestiveness, serenity, balance, sweetness, delicacy, clarity of thought and sense, breadth of expression, vigour of thought, brilliance of diction and harmony of sentiments. He uses economy of words and neatness of expression. Many of his lines have become almost like proverbs in Sanskrit. His pen-pictures are graceful and perfect, the royal chariot in full speed,[1] the running deer,[2] Urvaśī's bursting into tears,[3] Narada's appearance in the sky like a moving Kalpa-vṛksha.[4] He is also a great master in the use of similes. He, however, projects his rich and glowing personality on a great cultural tradition and gives utterance to its ideals of salvation, order and love. He expresses with ability the desires, the urges, the hopes, the dreams, the successes and the failures of man in his struggle to make himself at home in the world. India stood for a whole, integrated life and resisted any fragmentation of it. He, further, describes the psychological conflicts that divide the soul and helps us to pull the whole pattern together.

Womanhood

Kālidāsa is a lover of mankind and, thus, love of man and woman have attracted his first attention. 'He moved among men and women with a serene and god-like tread, neither self-indulgent nor ascetic, with mind and senses ever alert to every form of beauty.'[5] His women have a greater appeal than his men; for they reveal a timeless universal quality, whereas the men are dull and variable. They live in the surface, while the

[1] *Vikramorvaśīyam*, I, 4.
[2] *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, 1, 7.
[3] *Ibid*, V.V. 15.
[4] *Ibid*, V.V. 19.
[5] *Malavikāgnimitra*, 11.61; IV. 15; Ryder, A.W. (English translation) p. xiii.

women suffer from the depths; self-assertion of the man may be useful in the battle-field, in the office, but do not make for refinement, charm and serenity. The women keep the tradition alive with their love for order and harmony. But in describing feminine beauty he follows the traditional line and sometimes falls into the danger of sensuous engrossment. In the *Megha-duta*, the Yaksha gives description of his wife to the cloud-messenger.

"There she lives who is, as it were, the first creation of Brahma amongst women, slim, youthful (or fair in complexion) with pointed teeth, a lower lip red like a ripe bimba fruit, thin at the waist, with her eyes like those of a frightened female deer, with a deep navel, slow in gait on account of heavy hips and bending a little low by the weight of her breasts."[1] There are many such passages in all his works.

Kālidāsa's insight into women's mind, heart and soul is even truer and vivid than his insight into the nature of man. Many of them are properly educated. Umā and Mālavikā were educated.[2] Even the forest maiden Śakuntalā was literate.[3] He, further, says that marriage and motherhood are not only the obligations of womanhood, but are also the privileges, graces and sanctities of womanhood. Thus, in all his works he describes how by a pure wedded love men and women became fit for universal love and divine communion.

He points out in his delineation of Sītā's character, how noble women regard their husband as gods,[4] while emphasising the husband's full power over the wife, he clearly affirms that a good and noble wife is the household deity, minister, the comrade and the beloved disciple of the husband in the domain of his fine arts.[5] He has, thus, portrayed womanhood as the radiant centre of the finest social and spiritual life.[6] The good wives are the auspicious source of all righteous acts in life.[7] The Hindu ideal of Satī (*i.e.* pure and chaste) is one of the

[1]*Meghadūta*.
[2]*Kumārasambhava*, I, 30.
[3]*Abhijñānaśākuntala*.
[4]*Raghuvaṁśa*, XIV, 74.
[5]*Ibid*, VIII, 67.
[6]*Ibid*.
[7]*Kumārasambhava*, VI, 13.

noblest ideals known to human heart.[1] But equally noble is the ideal of being the wife of a hero and the mother of a hero.[2] His highest ideal of womanhood are perhaps Umā and Sītā; when the latter is in exile, she blames her own misfortune and not her lord. She sends this message to him.[3]

Poet of Love

His love poems are even more remarkable than his poems of nature. In the *Kumārasambhava* he says that the fulfilment of beauty is in love.[4] Again, Sītā expresses that she will practise penance in such a way that she can again unite with Rama as his beloved. Thus, in the opinion of Kālidāsa, it is the element of pure emotion which is of real value in love. But the physical enjoyment is merely a subordinate element. Even the Indian writers on erotics and aesthetics never stress sexual pleasure as the be-all and end-all of love. In their opinion separation of men and women makes the heart grow fonder and the passion of love shines better in absence than in union.[5] Such an attitude towards love is not due to any inherent joylessness but is due to a perception of higher and nobler aspects of love in preference to its narrow and personal aspects. Another nobler aspect of love is expressed in the *Meghadūta.*[6] The Yaksha refers to his beloved wife as his second life; and the lovers look everything through the eye of love.

Kālidāsa very often describes how love first originates into the mind of women. We have also seen in the *Śakuntalā* that the hunt of love is very delightful, but the separation is always painful. But the truest love bases itself on Dharma and is rewarded with the highest bliss. Lord Śiva also explains the importance of the moral and spiritual aspects of love to Pārvatī.[7] Thus, in the words of Kālidāsa, all human love approximates to divine love; and Uma's love attains the perfection of uniting one-half of her lord's form as her own.[8]

[1]*Kumārasambhava*, I, 21; IV, 33.
[2]*Malavikāgnimitra.*
[3]*Raghuvaṁśa*, XIV. 66.
[4]*Kumārasambhava*, V, I.
[5]*Meghadūta*, III, 15.
[6]*Meghadūta*, II, 22.
[7]*Kumārasambhava*, V, 38.
[8]*Ibid*, VII. 8, I, 50.

Poet of Beauty

The search for beauty is a natural instinct of man. Beauty also appeals to the eye and the mind, the heart and the soul. But it is difficult to realise what it is and what are its elements and what are its meaning, message and its value to the soul. Kālidāsa, however, knows the secret of beauty. He frequently compares the beauty of women to the beauty of tender leaves and blossomed creepers.[1] Similarly, when describing the beauty of leaf, flower, the analogy of human loveliness is brought in by the poet.[2] Moreover, a beauty is a dynamic quality and is the dynamic outward expression of the static bliss of the soul. Thus, this concept of beauty is a spiritual one, which is manifested through purity on one hand and love on the other.

In the *Śakuntalā* he suggests that supreme beauty is semi-divine and semi-human, and is the child of asceticism and divine loveliness and delight. It never depends on external aid for its attractiveness and cannot go together with baseness.[3] Over and above, Kālidāsa never regards beauty by itself as the real culmination of life. By showing the failure of Uma's beauty to captivate the heart of Lord Śiva and the success of Umā's penance in achieving that end, the poet has made us realise that beauty should lead to devotion and that devotion would lead to God. Finally, speaking about love, beauty and culture of the Indian life, Kālidāsa points out that, they are the standard, the measure and pattern of all the cultures and civilizations of the world in all times and climes;[4] and at the same time, he also recognises the beautiful Indian habits, customs, manners and institutions.

His Concept of Boyhood

In his opinion the world is kept young, sweet and noble by the presence of children and they play a prominent part in his different works. Thus, Umā's feeling for Kumāra,[5] Dilīp's love

[1]*Kumārasambhava*, III, 54, *Vikramorvaśīyam*, I, 14.
[2]*Kumārasambhava*, III. 30.
[3]*Ibid*, V, 36.
[4]*Ibid*, I, 1-3.
[5]*Ibid*, XI, 7, 18.

for Raghu[1] and Dushmanta's filial affection[2] for his son, Bharata, are wonderful places of literary products in the whole range of Sanskrit literature.

His Political, Social and Religious Ideals

Although Kālidāsa is a poet of love, nature and beauty, he has precise knowledge about the government, society and religion. He refers to Saptāṅga (seven limbs) of the state.[3] These are the king, (Svāmin), Amātya (minister), Janapada or Rāshtra (the territory of the State and its people), Durga (fortified city or capital), Koṣa (treasury), Daṇḍa (army) and Mitra (friends or allies). In his opinion, a royal prince trained in various ways can be selected as Yuvarāja who must also possess disciplined body and mind;[4] and he must have mastery over civil and military affairs. Morever, a king must know the art of pleasing his subjects, for each of his subjects must feel that he is the special favourite of the king.[5] His duties are the general education, protection of life and property and economic support of their subjects.[6] Again, the king must maintain law and order of the state and make his subject follow the law.[7]

Regarding taxation and public finance, the king is entitled to collect one-sixth of the produce of the land from his subjects [8] But the budget of the state should be so adjusted that the people derived benefit from it in a thousand ways. The sun draws water from the earth only to restore to her a thousand-fold.[9] There is no doubt that good monarchs tried to follow these principles in their fiscal policy. In the field of public administration the king was duly assisted by his ministers who always met him in secret.[10] Finally, Kālidāsa has given us the concept of a united India, and in the *Raghuvaṁśa* he describes

[1]*Raghuvaṁśa*, III, 25.
[2]*Ibid*, I. 13; III. 35.
[3]*Raghuvaṁśa*, I. 60; XIV. 6, 7, Also *Kāmandakīyā Nītisāra*, I, 16; *Sukra Nītisāra*, I, p. 122-24; Kane, *HDS*, III, p. 17.
[4]*Raghuvaṁśa*, I. 13; III. 35.
[5]*Ibid*, I. 12.
[6]*Ibid*, I. 24.
[7]*Ibid*, I. 17.
[8]*Ibid*, XVII, 65.
[9]*Ibid*, I. 18.
[10]*Ibid*, I. 20.

the kings of the solar race as the sovereigns of the entire earth.[1]

Kālidāsa teaches us to be grateful to God for the gift of our life[2] and our education should lead to wisdom and reverence, and reverence is the ornament of prosperity.[3] Even an idiot becomes an intelligent man coming in contact with the man of learning and education.[4] We must carry out spiritual injunctions as to our daily duties and cultivate self-control in success and failure.[5] We must constantly aim at doing something new and original for the service of man and the glory of God.[6]

In India the greatest value was set upon a stable social order which was done through the Varṇāśrama system. According to Kālidāsa, Varṇāśrama (Caste) never implied mere privileges and never led to arrogance or oppression or exploitation. The Brāhmaṇas lived a life of self-denial, piety and penance. Teaching, sacrificing for others and meditations for the gods are their noble professions. The Kshatriyas are liberal in gifts, foes of oppressors and friends of the oppressed, experts in self-control and born rulers of men.[7] The Vaiśyas are seen carrying commerce from one end to the other of the earth, and enhancing the wealth of the country;[8] and the Śūdras are experts in their traditional occupation.

His idea of the Absolute is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent and almighty which manifests itself in three forms (trimurti), Brahma, Vishṇu and Śiva; the maker, the preserver and destroyer. They are of equal rank and a believer may select any form which appeals to him for worship. Kālidāsa himself was a devotee of Śiva and in the opening verses of the *Śakuntalā*, *Vikramorvaśiya* and *Mālavikāgnimitra* he invokes Lord Śiva.

His range of experience is very wide. He enjoys life, people, flowers and pictures, As for himself, he does not separate men from the cosmos and from the forces of religion. He knows

[1]*Raghuvaṁśa*, 11. 47, V. 23, VIII. 4; *Vikramorvaśīyam*, III. 19, *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, VII. 33.

[2]*Raghuvaṁśa*, VIII. 87.

[3]*Ibid*, X. 70, 71.

[4]*Kumārasambhava*, VI. 55.

[5]*Ibid*, I. 52.

[6]*Ibid*, III. 19.

[7]*Raghuvaṁśa*, II, 53; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, I1, 16.

[8]*Ibid*.

the full range of human sorrow and desire, meagre joy and endless hope. He, further, points to a harmony of the four main interests of human life, Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Moksha; the ethical, the economic, the artistic and the spiritual. Kālidāsa, always, gives importance to Dharma and Moksha over Artha and Kāma, and one can attain liberation (Moksha) by means of rituals and Tapasyās.[1] Finally, he stresses the importance of our love to God for the attainment of liberation.[2]

Poet of Nature

The intimate relation between man and nature is also known to Kālidāsa. The responsiveness of nature to human heart is beautifully described in the fourth act of *Śakuntalā*. The nature has once again played the part of a soothing mother consoling and comforting the wounded heart of Dushmanta. In his *Ṛitusaṁhāra* we find a series of sketches of nature in course of the revolving year. They are so vivid and lively that a painter can keep steps with the poet and create a companion painting to illustrate each picturesque verse. The poet often delights in describing the cool, fragrant and gentle south wind in spring time.[3] But the ocean does not figure much in his works. He only describes the sea as a source of rain,[4] but the mountains like the Himalayas are treated as a living deity.[5] He is also at home with rivers and is very much fond of the holy waters of the river Gangā.[6] Moreover, animals and birds find frequent mention and sometimes receive exhaustive treatment in his works: particularly he is a great lover of cuckoos, swans, herons, peacocks, deer, elephants, horses, etc.

His Aesthetic Approach and Humour

Like a master artist Kālidāsa aims at revealing to us the very nature of the beautiful and the artistic and their aesthetic value. But he does not seek them through the gate of reason; he reaches the core of reality by imagination and intuition. He,

[1] *Kumārasambhava*, V. 38; *Raghuvaṁśa*, VII. 15.
[2] *Kumārasambhava*, XVII. 47.
[3] *Meghadūta*, III, 4; *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, IV. 4; *Kumārasambhava*, III. 25.
[4] *Raghuvaṁśa*, XIII.
[5] *Kumārasambhava*, VI. 58.
[6] *Kumārasambhava*, X. 29-31, 36; *Raghuvaṁśa*, XIII. 48.

thus, excels in all the elements of true poetry as described by Indian aesthetics. He has a never-failing store of Guṇas and Alaṁkāras; and his mastery over Bhāva, Rasa and Dhvani are equally remarkable.[1]

His humour is limited in range and never supreme. Nevertheless, some of his comic pictures are excellent and attractive. The jests and comic remarks of Vidușaka in *Mālavikāgnimitra* are of really high quality.[2] He sees the moon to be like a sweetmeat. Mādhavyā's description of hunting in the *Śakuntalā* is clever and witty.[3] He requests the king to save Kauntala from falling into the hands of some ascetic with dirty and matted hair.[4] Over and above, some of the comic scenes in his dramas are really enjoyable. Some of the attendants and maids of the play are witty and clever; special mention may be made of the witty remarks of Bakulavālikā in the *Mālavikāgnimitra*,[5] Chitralekhā in the *Vikramorvaśī*[6] and Priyamvadā in the *Śakuntalā*.[7] Again, in the *Kumārasambhava* we have a masterpiece of humorous descriptions in the disguised Śiva's delineation of Lord Śiva.[8] It also contains a humorous description of Kāli and Bhṛngi.[9]

His Works: Seven works are generally attributed to him; they are' *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, *Vikramorvaśīyam*, *Mālavikāgnimitra*, *Raghuvaṁśa*, *Meghadūta*, *Kumārasambhava* and *Ṛtusaṁhāra*.

Abhijñānaśākuntala ranks undoubtedly the foremost in the whole range of the Sanskrit dramatic literature. The gem of the story is found in *Mahābhārata*; but Kālidāsa made many radical changes in his drama. In course of hunting in the woods, king Dushyanta comes across Śakuntalā in a hermitage and both of them are married. He returned to the capital; Śakuntalā also follows him shortly. But due to the curse of Durbāsā, the king cannot recognise her as his wife. She, then, retires to the forest where a son is born to her; however, after many reverses they

[1]*Kumārasambhava*, V. 24; VI. 84.
[2]*Mālavikāgnimitra.*
[3]*Abhijñānaśākuntala.*
[4]*Ibid.*
[5]*Mālavikāgnimitra.*
[6]*Vikramorvaśīyam.*
[7]*Abhijñānaśākuntala.*
[8]*Kumārasambhava.*
[9]*Ibid.*

are again united.

The great genius of the poet has been remarkably displayed in his treatment of the admirable graces of poetry, in the grand description of nature, in the melody of the rhythm, in the lucid simplicity of his language, in the pathetic grace with which the various scenes are depicted. It is a drama of seven acts and within this framework the pathos and tenderness of the grief of Śakuntalā is portrayed with excellent skill. Her attachment to her friends Priyamvadā and Anasuyā, lower animals, trees, creepers, the pangs of separation felt by Kaṇva, have so much life in them that they cannot fail to win undying fame from posterity.

Goethe's lines about Śakuntalā are well-known:

"Wouldst thou the young year's blossoms
and the fruits of its decline,
And all by which the soul is charmed,
enraptured, feasted, fed, Wouldst thou the earth and heaven
itself in one sole none I name thee, O Śakuntalā,
and all at once is said combine?"[1]

"In this play we have the development of blossom into fruit, of earth into heaven, of passion based on physical attraction into love based on moral beauty and spiritual understanding. Śakuntalā inherits from her mother Menakā, beauty and light-heartedness, and from her father Viśvāmitra, the famous ascetic, patience and forgiving love. Freedom of sense and austerity of life brought her into being. In her own life the two, freedom and restraint, earth and heaven should combine."[2]

The *Vikramorvāśīyam* is another successful drama of five acts. It represents events partly celestial and partly terrestrial. The original theme is taken from the Ṛgveda;[3] but the poet has made many additions to it. The divine nymph Urvaśī fell in love with Pururavas. Before that she was playing the role of Lakshmī, divine consort of Purusottama (Vishṇu) who banished her from heaven and had to live with the king until the birth of a son, Ayus.

[1]Taken from Dey, S.K., *Meghadūta of Kālidāsa*, p. 27.
[2]*Kālidāsa*.
[3]*Ṛgveda*, 95.

The play is, however, very skilfully finished and the succession of events herein is very natural. Here, the fate is the ruling principle of the narrative, and the monarch, the nymph and the sovereign of the gods, are portrayed as subject to the inscrutable and inevitable decrees of Destiny.

The *Mālavikāgnimitra* is a drama in which the court life is fully depicted. The plot centres round the life of Agnimitra, son of Pushyamitra Śuṅga. Agnimitra has already two queens, Dhāriṇī, the senior, and Irāvatī, the junior. Dhārinī's waiting maid is Mālavikā who is a fugitive from a foreign land. After many reverses, her real identity is disclosed and is wedded with Agnimitra, for Mālavikā is really a Vidarbha princess, originally designed as his bride.

However, the description of events is colourful; but the palace intrigues would have held the breath of the audience for a time. Nevertheless, this drama is not of the first order which seems that it is his earlier composition. The painstaking exposition of the theory of music and acting, however learned and detailed, must have tired the patience of the audience.[1]

Meghadūta: The Sanskrit lyrical poetry has not produced many lyrical gems. But the *Meghadūta* (cloud messenger) of Kālidāsa is a gem in the lyrical literature. It consists of 115 stanzas composed in the Mandākrāntā metre. The theme is a message which an exile sends by a cloud to his wife dwelling far away. The exile is a Yaksha, an attendant of Kubera, the god of wealth. For the gross neglect of duties he was banished by Kubera to the groves of Rāmagiri in Central India. Emaciated and melancholy with love-laden heart, Yaksha sees at the approach of rainy season, a dark cloud moving northwards. This sight fills his heart with yearning, and impels him to address to the cloud a request to convey a message of hope to his wife in the remote Himalayas. In its superb beauty of composition and theme, *Meghadūta* may claim to inaugurate a romantic era in Sanskrit poetry which reaches its culmination in the *Gīta Govinda* of Jayadeva.

The *Ṛtusaṁhāra* is a descriptive poem of the six Indian seasons. It consists of 153 stanzas in six cantos and is composed in various metres. The glowing descriptions of seasonal beauty are

[1]*Mālavikāgnimitra.*

graphically described here. Perhaps, no other work of Kālidāsa manifests so strikingly his deep sympathy with Nature, his keen power of observation and his skill in depicting an Indian landscape in vivid and varied colours. Starting from summer, he beautifully describes seasons one after another.

The poet dwells longest on the delights of spring, the last of the six seasons. It is then that maidens, with Karnikāra flowers on their ears, with red Aśoka blossoms and a cluster of jasmine in their locks, go to meet their lovers. Then the hum of intoxicated bees is heard, and the note of the Indian cuckoo; the blossoms of the mango-tree are seen; these are the sharp arrows wherewith the god of flowery bow enflames the hearts of maidens to love.

The *Kumārasambhava* is a mahākāvya (great epic) in seventeen cantos. It deals with the birth of Kumāra Kārttikeya, the son of Śiva and Pārvatī; he destroys the demon Tārakā. The demon is the oppressor of the gods and in fact of everything noble in the world. It begins with a magnificent description of the Himalayas. Even the demigods and the divine spirits take delight in amorous sports there. Pārvatī is born in such environs and grows to be a marvellous beauty. After a great deal of struggle Pārvatī is able to unite with Śiva, and Kumāra (Skanda), the war god, is born. He grows to be a valiant youth of unsurpassed heroism; and finally his victory over the demon Tārakā is described. After Canto VIII, Kālidāsa has left this work unfinished and other 9 cantos are subsequently added to it by some inferior poet.

The *Raghuvaṁśa* (Dynasty of Raghu) is a narrative in nineteen cantos of the Solar race of kings. In course of writing this mahākāvya he has followed the technique of the Ādi-Kavi, Vālmīki. With perfect poetical imagination Kālidāsa has compressed the story of *Rāmāyaṇa* within the limits of this epic. Moreover, the Hindu religion with its many-fold varieties and complexities are happily mixed with descriptive verses, which can surpass the beauty of any other composition in the whole range of Sanskrit literature.

Indian philosophers and thinkers demand their objectives even of literature to conform to the fixed ideas of human existence, *i.e.* performance of one's duties (Dharma), earning of honest livelihood (Artha), realisation of legitimate desires and last, the

final, to which all the other three should lead cumulatively, the release (Moksha). And no culture has brooded over the deepest problems of human existence so thoroughly and consistently as the Brahmaṇic in India. Kālidāsa is the finest flower of this Brahmaṇic culture and as such he is not expected to ignore or evade at least the basic human problems in his works. He, thus, not only incorporates in his works his definite ideas about society, kingship, love and of manhood and womanhood, but also, his criticism of life as a whole. His works look like "wonders coming from the land of wonders."

Thus, "for Kālidāsa the path of wisdom lies in the harmonious pursuit of the different aims of life and the development of an integral personality. He impresses in our mind these ideas by the magic of his poetry, the richness of his imagination, his profound knowledge of human nature and his delicate descriptions of its most tender emotions.[1]

Śūdraka, Viśākhadatta and others

Although Śūdraka, Viśākhadatta and others less well known dramatists and writers are outshone by the brilliancy of Kālidāsa, their works have some definite literary and social value in the Classical Age. Śūdraka is the author of *Mrichchhakaṭika* (The Little Clay Cart).[2]

The hero of the play is Chārudatta, a large-hearted young Brahmin by birth and merchant by profession. As a perfect man of the world, he loves literature, music and art. Even he is not against gambling and does not dislike his association with courtesans. But his generosity is responsible for his poverty which does not touch his mind.

"This is the most realistic of Indian dramas, unravelling a complicated story, rich in humour and pathos and crowded with action, of the love of a poor Brahmin, Chārudatta, for the virtuous courtesan Vasantasenā; this story is interwoven with one of political intrigues, leading upto the overthrow of the wicked king Pālaka, and the play contains a vivid trial scene,

[1]Introduction by S. Radhakrishnan—Dey, S.K. *Meghadūta of Kālidāsa.*

[2]For his date—Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, p. 441; Mehandale, K.C., *Bhandarkar Commemorative Volume*, p. 367, Jolly, J., *Hindu Law of Partition*, p. 68; Basak, *IHQ*, 1929, pp. 229-325.

after which the hero is saved from execution at the last moment."[1]

From the world of the legendary heroes of antiquity or of elegant nobility, in this play we step into the streets of a city like Ujjaini and rub shoulders with thieves, gamblers, political insurgents, mendicants, courtiers, idlers, police constables, house-maids and courtesans. Incidents range from house breaking to murder and political revolution. There are nearly thirty characters, even the minor ones sculptured in the full round. With its panorama of *plebian* life and fine blending of realism and the romantic spirit, the play stands unique in the Sanskrit tradition.

"Viśākhadatta (6th century) was the dramatist of politics. His only complete surviving play 'The Minister's Signet Ring' *(Mudrārākshasa)*, deals with the schemes of wily Chāṇakya to foil the plots of Rākshasa, the minister of the last of the Nandas, and to place Chandragupta Maurya firmly on the throne. The plot is exceedingly complicated to lead up, like 'The Little Clay Cart,' to a pathetic scene where one of the chief characters is saved from execution at the last moment."[2] From the point of view of literary art, Viśākhadatta uses a direct, forcible diction admirably suited to the rapid tempo of his play and to his characters, all of whom are busy, practical-minded people. Moreover, he is the writer of another drama, called, *Devī-Chandraguptam* (the queen and Chandragupta); only a fragmentary portion of it is left to us. It tells us the heroic legend of Chandragupta II of the Gupta dynasty. It describes the story where Chandragupta II killed the Śaka king in the guise of his sister-in-law.

Grammar

Though there was an outburst of Sanskrit literature in this period its output in the works of Sanskrit grammar is disappointing. This was undoubtedly the popularity of the works of Pāṇini and Patañjali which rendered the acceptance of a new work extremely difficult. A Buddhist scholar from Bengal named Chandragomin, however, composed a grammar named *Chandra-Vyakaranam* who omitted a few rules of Pāṇini and

[1]Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, p. 441.
[2]*Ibid.*

added thirty-five new ones. Amarasiṁha, the author of *Amara-kośa*, the most popular Sanskrit dictionary, flourished in about the same time.

Prākrit, the popular language

Apart from the popularity of Sanskrit among the upper strata of the society, Prākrit form of Sanskrit was the language of the masses.[1] The Prākrit avoided harsh combination of consonants and gave preference to final vowels. The earliest Prākrit form was in Pāli which was commonly used by the Buddhists in their scriptures as well as in their preaching medium. But the Classical Age witnessed the evolution of other Prākrit forms such as, Sauraseni, used in Mathura and its vicinity, Ardha-Māgadhī spoken in Oudh and Bundelkhand, Māgadhi in modern Bihar and Mahārastrī in Berar.

Art of writing and scripts

The art of writing developed a great deal in that age. Paper was, perhaps, not known to them. But they used birch-bark, palm leaves, cloth, hide, wood, stone, earthen objects, copper-plates, etc.[2] Lekhanīs (*i.e.* stilus, pencil, brush, pen, etc.) were used in writing letters (aksharas)[3] and the ink for writing was called mashī, mashi, masi or masi and mela in Sanskrit.[4] The practice of writing the letters of a record with an ink on a softer material and of scratching or engraving them on a hard substance were both popular in the Classical Age.[5] We also notice a remarkable development of the Brāhmī script in our period. They are the following.

Most of the famous literary works of this age were thus, composed in Sanskrit and the age is generally called by many Indologists the golden age of the Sanskrit literature and scientific thinking. Kālidāsa, "The most brilliant luminary in the literary firmament of the Gupta Age (who has shed lustre on the whole of Sanskrit literature"[6] will help the mankind to

[1] *Abhijñānaśākuntala.*
[2] Sircar, D.C., *Indian Epigraphy*, pp. 61-68.
[3] *Ibid*, pp. 81-82.
[4] *Indian Epigraphy*, p. 80.
[5] *Ibid*, pp. 70-78.
[6] Majumdar and Pusalker, *The Classical Age*, p. 302.

taste the great literary products of the world.

Everyday Science

In the Gupta age the sciences of Mathematics and Astronomy[1] were also cultivated with success and distinction.

The formulation of the Theory of Zero and the consequent evolution of the Decimal System are to be credited to the thinkers of this age. Āryabhaṭṭa, Varāhamihira and Brahmagupta were in their own days the famous astronomers and mathematicians of the world. In his famous work, the *Sūrya Siddhānta*, Āryabhaṭṭa examines and explains the true causes of the solar and the lunar eclipses. His calculation of the size of the earth is very near to the modern estimation. He was the first Indian astronomer to discover and declare that the earth rotates round its axis. He worked out and explained the variations of planetary motions, details about the eclipse, the sun, the moon, etc. He was the first scientist to discover sine functions and utilise them in astronomy. One of his disciples Latadeva was very famous as the Sarva-Siddhāntaguru (the expert in the whole science). He expounded *Paulisa* and *Romaka Siddhanta.*

Āryabhaṭṭa was the author of *Āryabhaṭṭiyam* which deals with arithmetic, geometry, algebra and probably trigonometry. Another astronomer and natural scientist was Varāhamihira who probably flourished during this age.[2] His *Brihat-Saṁhitā* is an encyclopaedia of astronomy, physical geography, botany and natural history. His other works are *Pancha Siddhāntikā, Brihatjātaka* and *Laghujātaka.*

The Hindu astronomers of the age had discovered that the heavenly bodies shine by reflected light; they were aware of diurnal motion of the earth on its axis and had calculated its diameter. Brahmagupta, another famous astronomer and mathematician of the age, anticipated Newton by declaring that "all

[1]The astronomical study had gained so much popularity that the poet like Kālidāsa has thorough acquaintance with the subject. *Raghuvaṁśa,* I, 46, 83; II. 15, 32, 39; III. 13, 17, 22; IV. 19; V. 61; VI. 22; VII. 19; VIII. 42, 82, XII. 25, 28, 29, 86; XIII. 76; XIV. 40, 50; XVI. 27; XVII. 30; XVIII. 27, 32; *Kumārasambhava,* VI. 7; VJr. 1, 6, 35; *Mālavikāgnimitra,* V, 71; *Abhijñānaśākuntala,* VII. 7, 22.

[2]Maity, *ELGP.*

things fall to the earth by law of nature; for it is the nature of the earth to attract and keep things." Over and above, the Vaisesika School of Physicists pronounced the atomic theory.

Metallic preparations for the purpose of medicine and references to the use of mercury and iron by Varāhamihira and others indicate that such progress was made in chemistry. The medical schools of Charaka and Suśruta, which was established in the earlier period, continued to flourish even in the Classical Age. The *Charaka Saṁhitā* and the *Suśruta Saṁhitā* were still accepted as the guide books of medicine and surgery. They had very great influence in medical science throughout the Hindu period; even to-day the modern Ayurvedic system very closely follow them. The *Navanitakam* was another medical work, which is a manual of recipes, formulae, and prescriptions, borrowed from the *Bhela Saṁhitā*, the *Charaka Saṁhitā* and the *Suśruta Saṁhitā*. It was discovered in 1890 at Kuchar in Eastern Turkistan. Palakapya was the author of *Hastayayurveda* on the Veterinary science. Over and above, the methods of distillation and disinfections were perhaps discovered by Nāgārjuna of the earlier period. Large number of medical drugs were produced and much attention was paid to sanitation and hygiene. Proper attention was devoted to surgery and surgical instruments and this practice was, perhaps, continued from the age of the Kushāṇas. We are also told that dissection was practised, and students were trained in the art of holding the lancet, in cutting, making and piercing with it, in extracting darts, in cleaning wounds, in causing them to dry up, the application of ointments and in the administration of emetics, purges and oily enemas. Thus, medical science[1] which made considerable progress in the Classical Age was widely studied and Sanskrit medical treatises were the basis of much of the later Arabian learning which reached Europe via Alexandria in the Middle Ages.

[1]The works of Kalidasa also testify to the popularity of medical science and its common use. *Raghuvaṁśa*, II. 32; III. 1, 2, 6, 7, 15, 26, 12; IV. 4; VIII. 93; X. 48, 59, 69, 78; XI. 61; XII. 61, 97; XIII. 62; XIV. 26; XIX. 48, 49, 50, 53, 54. *Kumārasambhava*, II. 21, 48; *Mālavikāgnimitra*, IV. 4.

CHAPTER IX

GUPTA ART

Indian art is so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Indian life and religion that it is almost a spontaneous growth and not a self-conscious exercise in art technique. In sharp contrast with modern art in which reason plays the dominant role, the great religious art of India is mainly a product of the artist's institution. Like Indian philosophy the ancient Indian art of India is widely varied and yet bears an unmistakable stamp of a fundamental unity which has renewed itself again and again over centuries and through myriads of shapes and forms. The ancient Indian artist was mainly interested in religious objects. But he was not indifferent to natural phenomena nor was he incapable of portraying them. His approach was however different from that of his European counterpart. While the latter's approach was analytic, the former's was intuitive in order to realise the inner meaning of Nature. While the European artist had striven to understand the external manifestations of Nature, the India's ultimate goal was to realize the eternal behind the transient phenomena of Nature.

This fundamental difference has made Indian art essentially idealistic and symbolic. In this respect it bears a similarity with the Gothic art of Europe with this difference that while the latter concentrates on the mortification of the flesh, the former endeavours to catch a glimpse of the spiritual sphere. The same Yogic training of the mind which inspired Indian seers was also at the root of Indian art. Hence perhaps the supreme manifestation of Indian art was the figure of the *Yogi* immersed in meditation. This is common to all schools of Indian art. But since it is commonly associated with Buddhism, this has led many to seek in vain its roots in the Graeco-Bactrian tradition,

and this attempt has been responsible for bizarre confusions.

The Buddha was a Yogin par excellence. Hence, when he was portrayed by the Indian artist he was given such a figure as would conform to the common Indian ideal of one who had transcended human limitations and attained divinity. Hence the Buddha figures were not essentially different from those of Indian divinities like Śiva, Brahmā and Vishṇu. The Gandhāra school caught just a glimpse of this lofty idea and yet represented the Buddha as an Apollo. But the Buddha as an Apollo was never an inspiration to Indians.[1]

In the opinion of A.K. Coomaraswamy, "the outstanding characteristic of the art of India at this time is its classical quality. In the Kushāṇa period the cult image is still a new and important conception, and there we find, quite naturally, magnificent primitives, or clumsy and unwieldy figures,... In the Gupta period the image had taken its place in architecture, become necessary, it loses importance, and enters into the general decorative scheme, and in this integration acquires delicacy and repose. At the same time technique is perfected, and used as a language without conscious effort, it becomes the medium of conscious and explicit statement of spiritual consciousness, it is equally true of sculpture, painting and the dance. With a new definition of beauty it establishes, the classical phase of Indian art, at once serene and energetic, spiritual and voluptuous. The formulae of Indian taste are now definitely crystallised and universally accepted; iconographic types and compositions, still variable in the Kushāṇa period, are now standardised in forms whose influence extended far beyond the Ganges valley, and of which the influence was felt, not only throughout India and Ceylon, but far beyond the confines of India proper, surviving to the present day.

The rich decorative resources of Gupta art are to be understood in terms of its inheritance, indigenous, Early Asiatic, Persian and Hellenistic. The Gupta style is unified and national. Plastically, the style is derived from that of Mathurā in the Kushāṇa period, by refinement and definition, tendencies, destined still later, in the natural course of events to imply attenuation.[2]

[1]Havell, E.B., *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, pp. 25-26.

[2]Coomaraswamy, A.K., *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, pp. 71-72.

Thus, in the history of Indian art, Gupta art occupies a significant position of prestige and glory. It is a flower of established tradition, a polished and perfected medium from the standpoint of thought and feeling. By evolving the Nāgara and Drāviḍa style, Gupta art ushers in the history of Indian architecture, a formative and creative age with unlimited scope for future development and elaboration. In the history of Indian sculpture, the art is the fulfilment of earlier tendencies, while in the history of Indian painting, it represents the climax to which genuine Indian art has attained.

Architecture

The architecture of the period may be broadly grouped under two heads—(i) rock-cut caves and (ii) structural temples. The rock-cut caves continue the old forms to a large extent, but possess striking novelty by bringing about extensive changes in the ornamentation of the facade and in the designs of the pillars in the interior. A profusion of sculptures and paintings are also to be found in most of the caves. The most notable groups of rock-cut caves are found at Ajantā and Ellora, all within Mahārāṣṭra, and Bāgh in the Madhya Pradesh. Most of these caves belong to the Buddhist faith, though Brāhmaṇical and Jain establishments of this type are not rare. The Udaygiri caves are also of this type. But the rock-cut caves, with their peculiar advantage of no great constructional problem are, however, ill-suited to the complex ritualistic needs. The construction of temples was, therefore, undertaken to fill in this gap.

Temple

The wave of creative enthusiasm and the intensely religious purpose that swept the country in this age are seen in their most dominant form in the prolific architectural activity of the period. The following well defined groups may be distinguished among the structural temples belonging to this period.

They are: (i) a flat-roofed square temple with a shallow porch in front; (ii) the flat-roofed square temple, with a covered ambulatory passage around the sanctum and preceded by a porch in front, sometimes with a second storey above; (iii) a square temple with a low and squat tower or *śikhara* above; (iv) a rectangular temple with an apsidal backs and barrel

vaulted roof above; (v) a circular temple with shallow projections at the four cardinal points.

The temple at Ters and the Kapoteśwara temples as well as the Durgā temple at Aihole belong to the fourth group. The fifth type may be seen in the peculiar cylindrical brick-structure, known as Maniyar Math. This structure is the result of a successive accumulations of skill through the ages, of which one definitely falls within this period.

The three other groups of the temples may be regarded as the fore-runners of the mediaeval Indian architecture. A representative example of the first may be found in the temple No. XVII at Sāñchi. Though modest in dimensions its structural propriety, symmetry and proportion, appreciation for plain surfaces, and restraint in ornamentation may very well compare with the best creations of classical architecture in Greece. Other temples of this group are found[1] at Tigawa and at Eran. One temple known as Sankarmadha (Saṅkar Matha) at village Kunda, at Jaba'pur is of that type. This group has a distinct place among the temple forms of the period as the basis for future elaborations. The nucleus of a temple *viz.*, a cubical cella *(garbhagṛiha)* with a single entrance and a porch *(maṇḍapa)*, appears for the first time in this archaic group of structural temples.

Examples of this second group may be seen in the so-called Pārvatī temple of Nachna Kuthara, the Śiva temple at Bhumara, and the Lad Khan, the Kout-Gudi and the Meguti temples at Aihole. The remains of the brick-built temple at Baigram (in Bangladesh), the brick temples at Paharpur in Bangladesh also exhibit a similar plan and may probably have belonged to the same type. The facade of the Pārvatī temple bear carvings in imitation of rock-work. The walls of the Lad Khan and the Kout-Gudi are formed by latticed screens joined to pillars. The Śiva temple at Bhumara was splendidly ornamented with figures of *gaṇas*, kirtimukhas, etc.

The *rathas* at Mamallapuram, though rock-cut, reproduce the contemporary types of structural buildings and as such exemplify an entirely novel form of expression. Of the various types furnished by these *rathas*, one is particularly related to

[1]Debala Mitra's article in *JASB.*

the second group of temples, belonging to this period.

The importance of the third group lies in the innovation of a *śikhara* or tower that caps the sanctum. In religious architecture there is always an aspiration for ascending height, and our epigraphs and literary account tells us that already by the fifth century AD high and lofty towers had come into existence and they are figuratively described to be as high as the Kailāsha mountain.

Of the different examples of this group it will suffice to describe the Deogarh and the Bhitargaon temples as two representative specimens, the former in stone and the latter in brick. The Dasāvatāra temple at Deogarh appears, in contour, to have been a straight edged pyramid. Towards the top of its walls there is a frieze of miniature arched niches between a double cornice from over which rises the Śikhara. The projection on the body of the sanctum in the Bhitargaon temple has been carried up the body to the tower, but as the top has tumbled down no definite idea of the crowning elements is possible. In almost every case the tower is either badly damaged or gone altogether, but the contour of the examples that have been preserved suggests a straight-edged pyramidal form, not unlike that of the present Mahābodhi temple at Bodh Gaya.

The cruciform plan and the Rekhā tower which form the distinctive features of the Nagara style already make their appearance in the Dasāvatāra temple of Deogarh, the brick-built Lakshmaṇa temple at Sirpur in Raipur District, and the brick temple of Bhitargaon. The sculptured niches on the three walls of the Dasāvatāra temple and the projection in the Bhitargaon temple even foreshadow the setting forward of the middle of each side of the square temple which is another characteristic of the ground plan of the Nagara temples. Similarly, the second group of the Gupta temples show many of the characteristic features of the Dravida style.

Stupas

Stupas and monasteries were also built in large numbers during the period, and three of them at least deserve particular mention, namely, the stupa at Mirpur Khas in Sindh, the Dhamekh stupa at Sārnāth and the Buddhist Stupa at Ratna-

giri, District Cuttack, Orissa.

Sculpture and Metal Statues

Gupta sculptural art, the pivot of which is the human figure, sprang from the notion of a disciplined body and conquered mind. If the schools of Bhārhut, Sāñchi and Mathurā are marked by a sensual earthiness, and that of Amarāvatī by vital, excited movement, the Gupta sculpture suggest serenity, security and certainty. Aggressive beauty, such as, may be noticed in the sportive female figures on Mathurā rail pillars did no longer accord the spirit of the Gupta age; much greater emphasis was now laid on the ideal of *tapas* (meditation). It was at this time that India produced some of her most truly religious art, especially in the lovely Buddhas of Sārnāth.

In the countless seated or standing images of the Buddha or Bodhisattvas and also certain Brāhmaṇical images, of the Sārnāth school of this period, the body sheds of all its toughness, attains full and soft roundness and exhales an aroma of complete ease and serenity. All this is achieved with the help of a soft and delicate modelling, a softly gliding, smoothly flowing, melting line, and an utmost economy of plastic differentiation, with the passage of time, the physiognomical type grows longer, the head slightly smaller and lighter, plastic treatment more delicate and sensitive, and altogether a supra-sensuous extramundane soaring elegance results, till finally the modelling and outline seem to throb with an almost uncanny sensitiveness. Such preparation, such pointed ecstasy of blissful experience rendered in such concrete form is almost unbelievable. A good specimen is the well-known seated Buddha in *dharma-chakra-pravarttana* attitude from Sārnāth but there are examples in the Sārnāth museum which are perhaps equally good, if not better still.

The Buddha image in the Gupta school provides an important testimony of the freshness and vitality of that art. As Smith remarks, the Gupta Buddha is "absolutely independent of the Gandhāra school." It reveals the fullest fruition of the Indian genius in perfecting a figure in harmony with its own spiritual conceptions.

Of the Brāhmaṇical images perhaps the most immediately impressive is the Great Boar, carved in relief at the entrance of

a cave at Udayagiri. It bears the impression of a great primeval power working for good against the forces of chaos and destruction. The deep feeling which inspired the carving of this figure makes it perhaps the only theriomorphic image in the world's art which conveys a truly religious message to modern man. The splendid figure of the sun-god, Surya, from Gwalior illustrates another aspect of the outlook of the times. Broad and sturdy, cheerfully smiling, the deity looks straight ahead at his worshippers, his right hand raised in blessing, the god of a good-natured happy people.

Again, the sculpture of this period is also rich in secular themes taken from life and in charming ornamental designs. A charming relief of a dancer, accompanied by girl musicians, is found at Pawaya, near Gwalior. A lintel in the Lucknow Museum illustrates the lively scene of the wrestling duel between Bhīmasena and Jarāsandha. On a number of door-jambs from Garhwa, Bhumara, Deogarh, we find the Kalpalatā motif treated in an exquisite style.

The Gupta artistes and craftsmen were no less capable in working metals. The art of casting copper statues on a large scale by the cire process was practised with conspicuous success. A copper image of Buddha, about 80 feet high, was erected at Nālandā in Bihar at the close of the sixth century; and the fine Sultanganj Buddha of 7½ feet high, is still to be seen in the Birmingham Museum.

The Buddhas and Bodhi-sattvas of the Sārnāth of the fifth and sixth centuries represent the plastic process and final achievement of a highly subtle and mystical thought known as the *Mahāyāna-Yogāchāra.* They are the culmination of a spiritual quest that started its career in the early centuries of the Christian era.

The most important centres of this quest were Mathurā and Sārnāth, roughly the Ganga-Yamuna valley. The failure of Mathurā to reveal in plastic formulation the true spirituality and sensitiveness was left for Sārnāth to attain. The reverberations of Mathurā and Sārnāth were heard in other centres, as well, but in varying tones of intensity, according to local pre-conditions ethnical, religious and social. What we see in *Aryāvarta* during these centuries is the fruition of this quest, so far as plastic creations of the Buddha or Bodhi-sattva figures are

concerned contemporary Brāhmaṇical sculptures also, at least quite a few of them, of *Aryāvarta*, were inspired by this quest; it is enough to refer in this connection to the Karttikeya from Banaras and the Ekamukha Liṅga from Khoh in the Madhya Pradesh. But the majority of Brāhmaṇical sculptures, though belonging to the common denominator of Gupta plastic vision, was not touched by this thought and spiritual quest, which is easily discernible from the Brāhmaṇical reliefs of the period. *Aryāvarta* was then in a great ferment of thought, and minds and ideas came into conflict with minds and ideas. Out of this ferment and turmoil evolved a neo-Brāhmaṇism which found popular expression in the contemporary redactions of the Purāṇas and the Epics. The more significant Brāhmaṇical sculptures of the period are concerned with the notions and the concrete manifestation of this neo-Brāhmaṇism. The result is the growth of sculptures of dynamic power and strength whether latent in meditative absorption or expressed in vigorous action, in contrast to the high sensitiveness and radiant spirituality of Gupta Sārnāth art.

Paintings

The art of painting became a potent force in the national culture of India and were used as decorative purpose. Generally it lost touch with real life, when paintings came to be regarded more as an article of luxury for the connoisseur than as a means of instruction and spiritual uplift for the whole community. According to the early Buddhist records pictures were used in popular festivals and in civic life. No town or village festival was complete unless the highways and streets were made gay with pictures painted on the house-fronts or on scrolls and banners hung on temporary screens of bamboo. The tradition of this folk art are still alive.

In the great stupas and temples mural paintings gradually replaced painted wood or stone carvings. "In Italy it was known as *fresco-buono* in which different colours mixed with lime-water were applied to a prepared surface of the finest plaster, while it was still wet, so that they were chemically united with the ground. Indian *fresco-buono* is exceedingly permanent process for interior decoration and much more durable

in our tropical climate than oil paintings."[1]

The art of painting seems to have been more in general practice and popular demand in the Gupta period than the art of stone sculpture. The literature of the period tells us that the art of painting was an accomplishment which every man and woman of culture desired to attain. From the technical texts on art of the period, we know further, of the different canons and methods about painting, while the sculpture of the period was primarily religious in nature, painting, however, partook largely of a secular character.

The substantial remains of paintings of this period are found at Ajantā, Bāgh, Bādāmi and in other places. But the norm is supplied in every case by those at Ajantā. Only a very small fragment remains of what must once have covered the entire flat spaces of the long series of caves at Ajantā. But even these unmistakably portray a crowded world of lively and fresh vegetation, of gods and semi-divine beings, of *apsarās* and *kinnaras*, of a rich and varied flora of pagentry and processions, of gaiety and love, of sublimity and coarseness, all bathed in the mellowed lights of the softness and elegance of a highly intellectual, refined and sophisticated civilization. Here, we see the whole life of contemporary India in panorama,—princes in their palaces, ladies in their harems, coolies with loads slung over their shoulders, beggars, peasants and ascetics, together with all the many beasts and birds and flowers of India. Such simple and graphic narration endowed with the richness of expression of refined emotions and sensibilities of a highly cultured society is indeed unsurpassed in the whole history of graphic art.

On the technical side the surface of these paintings was perhaps in a very simple way. Pulverised rock, cowdung, earth, and chaff were mixed and the resultant composition was thoroughly pressed on the rather porous surface of the volcanic trap rock. The surface was then levelled with a towel and after it was dried the drawings in bold outline were directly done by the artists in red ochre. Red ochre, yellow ochre, indigo, lapis lazuli, lamp black and chalk were used as colours very effectively. The mural paintings of Ajantā are not, thus, as Coomaraswamy suggests, true frescoes, for a fresco is painted while the

[1]E. B. Havell, *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, p. 65.

plaster is still damp and the murals of Ajantā were made after it had set.

No frame divides one scene from the next, in the Ajantā paintings, but they blend one into the other, the minor figures and the pattern skilfully leading the eye to the central figures of each scene. There is no perspective, but an illusion of depth is given by placing the background figures somewhat above those in the foreground. The effect of this convention is like that of a photograph taken with a telescopic camera, and makes the figures stand out from the flat wall as though coming to meet the observer.

Among the themes that are still recognisable in cave XVI are the three Buddhas, a sleeping woman, and the sequel to the *Shad-danta Jātaka* represented by a dying princess; in cave XVII, the seven Buddhas, the Simhatavadana, wheel of causation, return to Kapilāvastu, consecration ceremony, a love scene, the *Mahāvamsa, Matriposhaka, Suru, Shad-danta, Śibi, Viswantara,* and *Nalagiri Jātakas,* and *gandharvas* and *apsarās,* in cave XIX (which may be slightly later in date), return to Kapilāvastu and a number of Buddhas; in cave I, the Great Bodhisattvas, Maradharshana, Panchika story, Śibi and Nāga Jātakas, love scenes, etc.; and the cave II, Śrāvasti miracle, palace and Indraloka scenes, Kshantivadin and Mātribala Jātaka, etc.

"For the purpose of art education", observes Griffiths who also spent thirteen years in closely studying the Ajantā paintings, "no better examples could be placed before an Indian student than those to be found in the caves of Ajantā. Here we have art with life in it, human faces full of expression, limbs drawn with grace and action, flowers which bloom, birds which soar, and beasts that spring, or fight or patiently carry burdens; all are taken from Nature's book,—growing after her pattern and in this respect differing entirely from Muhammadan art, which is unreal, unnatural, and therefore incapable of development."

The paintings at Bāgh in Malwa (M.P.) represent only an extension of the Ajantā school. In two of the groups the subject is extremely gay, illustrating the performance of the hallisaka dance, a musical drama acted by troupe of women led by a man. They are elaborately dressed, singing and dancing with considerable freedom. The beautiful dancing Apsarā from Sittannavasal case is likewise a masterpiece of Indian painting.

The art of Ajantā and Bāgh shows the Madhyadesa school of painting at its best. It captured in itself the best traditions of the art renaissance at home and set up traditions which travelled to far off countries, such as Central Asia, China, Korea, Japan and Burma. It became the cosmopolitan art of the Buddhist world, and seems to have gone with Buddhism wherever it went. The discovery of frescoes in central Asia, in Khotan, at Turfan, at Tunhuang have only served to focus greater attention on the frescoes of Ajantā.

Terracottas

Terracottas formed another important branch of Gupta art. Clay modellers created things of real beauty and achieved a wide popularity for their art. In status and prestige the modellers compared favourably with the builder, the painter and the engraver. Clay figurines were used both for religious and secular purposes. They served as the poor man's sculpture and contributed largely to broad-based aesthetic culture and popularise art.

The terracotta figures of the Gupta period may be classified under three heads: (a) gods and goddesses, (b) male and female figures, (c) animal figurines and miscellaneous objects. Among deities we have figures of Vishṇu, Kārttikeya, Sūrya, Durgā on lion, Kubera and Nāgas, etc. At Ahichchhatra we have life-size images of Gaṅgā and Yamunā stood on the sides of the main approach to the terraced temple of Śiva. Another big figure from Kasia shows seated Pārvatī with her two sons Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya engaged in a lively scramble for sweet balls. Many other life size terracottas from Panna in Midnapur district have also been found and are kept in the State Archaeological museum, West Bengal and also in the Ashutosh Museum, Calcutta. The group of detached male and female figures shows a great variety of forms, comprising charming representations of aristocratic men and women, figures of foreigners from Persia and Central Asia, whose influx in the population introduced new facial types, too. Conspicuous to be ignored by the modellers, and ordinary figures of attendants of all classes, like grooms, elephant-riders, jesters and dwarfs, etc.

Hundreds of specimens hold out to our eyes even today the charming ideals of feminine beauty immortalized by the classical

poets like Kālidāsa and later writer like Bāṇa the terracotta figurines from the recent excavations at Rājghat and Ahichchhatra present a feast of beauty to the eye and the best female heads skilfully finished appear like lyrics expressed in clay. The pottery types of the Gupta period also played a noteworthy part in the cultural scheme of the age.

The characteristic features of Gupta art are refinement, naturalness, simplicity of expression and a dominant spiritual purpose which has given it an unchallenged greatness for all times. The exuberance and whirlpool movement of Amarāvatī marbels yielded place to an aesthetic sobriety in the treatment of the drapery, ornaments and other elements of decoration. The transparent drapery revealing the nudity of feminine form in the Kushāṇa period now serves to enhance the loveliness of the modulating lines of the figure.

Leaving the earliest fragments of art known in India, in the Indus valley culture, it is only from the time of Aśoka that we can properly begin the history of the art of ancient India. Aśoka first substituted stone for wood, the common material for building purposes before his time, and the Maurya art began with a tremendous force showing both engineering ability and brilliant display of fine art. While Bhārhut and Sāñchī were attempting to reveal the great Man through the experiments of symbolism in the far North and North-West was born the Gāndhāra art trying to interpret Indian subjects through the Greco-Roman technique.

Now, the art of experiment is transformed into a classical maturity of expression and the elegant perfection of a consciously confident technique. The art of this age is rightly called classical, for it sets the standard which was alike the ideal and despair of the succeeding ages.

Born of an art-loving society, rich in cultural heritage, Gupta style earned the status of a truly national art. Transplanted in new environs beyond the boarders of India with its inherent vigour and richness of contents this art brought into being the cultural empire of Greater India whose immortal glories have been unearthed from the waterless deserts of Central Asia and the islands of the East. The convention of fresco painting especially founded a congenial home towards Central Asia and China and was received with enthusiasm by many foreign races

which had come under the influence of Buddhism which looked for inspiration to India in the matter of culture, religion and literature.

In order to realise the importance of Gupta art properly, we have to review it in its historical perspective. So a few words are needed about the pre-Gupta art.

The roots of Indian art can be traced to the Mesolithic or the Middle Stone Age; but when we come to the time of Indus Valley civilization we find Indian artistic tradition well established fairly as compared with the then human civilisation on the earth. But after the collapse of that civilization follows a long gap and not until the age of Magadhan imperialism do we come across the vestiges of a flourishing culture. The history of Indian art really begins in this period for though the Sanskrit literature gives a vista of a great Aryan civilization in India beginning from several millenia before the Christian era, the evidence of its artistic evolution have been lost most probably because of its fragile materials like wood that were used in it. Yet the Harappan art may be regarded as related to the Mauryan art, because of the image of the goddess found at Lauria Nandangarh has the unmistakable characteristic of the Harappan Mother Goddess—the heavy bust, round hips and the mekhala. According to Havell the stupas and pillars together with the chapels and monasteries built in the Mauryan period provide the earliest evidence of the systematic history of Indian art. But the Mauryan art was "a court-art" reared up by the patronage of a court influenced by the contemporary culture of Western Asia and Eastern Mediterranean. It was not a mass culture and so was destined to have an isolated and short life, co-existant with the Mauryan Court.

Though the Suṅga-Kaṇva art following Maurya art chronologically is a continuation of Mauryan art, yet both the formal and spiritual traditions of it are opposed to the Mauryan art and differ in technique and significance.

It perfectly served the purpose of story telling. It reflected mass culture which Mauryan art almost failed. The foreign influence of the West-Asiatic forms and motifs were fused and integrated into local forms. So this art inaugurated the first chapter of indigenous Indian art.

Despite its rich animal and vegetal patterns it generally failed

regarding human figuration. These figures lack life and seem almost static. They are mostly of huge and massive stature, *e.g.* the figure of Yakṣas and Dvārapālas and Buddha and Bodhisattvas of Mathurā and Amarāvatī. The important feature of Gāndhāra art is that Indian objects have been represented in Hellenic forms; *e.g.* Yakṣas and Buddha in the form of Genii and Apollo. According to Havell, the importance of the Gāndhāra art in the evolution of Indian artistic ideals have been immensely exaggerated by writers obsessed with the idea that everything Greek must be superior to everything Indian; Gāndhāra art is lifeless and decadent, in so far as it is Greek or Roman, the more it becomes Indian the more it becomes alive.

Now, we turn to the Gupta art. As Coomaraswamy puts it, the 5th century AD saw the culmination of the two phases of Indian history the Vedic and the Epic, and the efflorescence of another—a Golden Age. In his opinion, the Indian art is so to speak a product of Nature characterised by simplicity and naturalism than artistc; but Gupta art is the flower of an established tradition, a polished and perfected medium like the Sanskrit language. The earlier trends and tendencies are absorbed in the Gupta Art. The long and continuous evolution of art in the previous centuries paved the way for the complete efflorēscence of the artistic genius of the people in the Gupta period. The Gupta art is the outcome of the classical art of Mathurā and Amarāvatī. Its plasticity is derived from that of Mathurā and elegance from that of Amarāvatī; yet the Gupta Art belongs to an entirely elevated sphere. The artists of the previous ages were mainly engrossed with the physical phenomena. But the lush sensuality of Amarāvatī and Mathurā underwent a change towards serenity and sublimity, in the hands of the Gupta artists. The human figure is of central importance in Gupta sculpture, while the vegetal patterns have receded to the background. The Gupta artists unlike their predecessors skilfully handled stone like some malleable substance and infused life in the statues. Though the human figures engross the vision of the artists, yet, in marked contrast with the sensuousness of the Kuṣāṇa figures, the Gupta figures are adorned with poise and sublimity. The Gupta sculptor unlike his Kuṣāṇa predecessor devotes himself to the manifestation of an unearthly beauty of a controlled body and a conquered

mind. This sublimity of spirit is best exemplified by the Buddha images of this period. The purport of these figures is not to impress people with their colossal stature but to manifest Buddha as the very embodiment of love and kindness. According to Havell by the time of the Guptas the original Buddhist creed had been profoundly influenced by the Yoga philosophy; the spirit of Indian thought is symbolised in the conception of the Buddha, calm and impassive, his thought free from all worldly desires and passions and his body and mind raised above all physical and intellectual strife. It is the very antithesis of Western ideal; it symbolises the power of the spirit resulting not from wrestling, nor from intellectual strife but from Yoga, union with the universal Soul. The Gupta art attained its perfection in the seated Buddha at Sāranāth, the standing Buddha at Mathurā, the copper image of Buddha from Sultangunge and the head of Buddha with an inexpressibly sad but lovely face. Especially the Sāranāth Buddha is incomparable. One is struck with the purity of its lives. It is so human and yet without any earthly trait; the eyes are closed as if penetrating into such a deep beauty as unseen by mortal eyes. The face is not that of an ascetic, nor of a man of wisdom, nor of a handsome lover; it glows with an unfading joyous serenity and spells out the onlooker the charm of a music of a world which knows neither sorrow nor sadness.

The strength and vigour of this art blended with naturalism and refined by idealistic touch are reflected in the images of the *avatāras* and the divinites of the Purāṇic pantheon. The landmarks of this art are the Narasiṁha from Besnagar, M.P., the superb bronze figure of Brahmā of Mirpur Khash in Sind and the Sun God from Gwalior, M.P. But the Purāṇic masterpiece as they are the expression of the vigour of this age are the Gwalior Paraśurāma and the Varāha relief in the Udayagiri caves. The whole body of Paraśurāma is endowed with strength and vigour. The Varāha relief betrays primeval strength.

The soft and pliant body with its smooth and shining texture is the main feature not only of the images of divinities, like the Buddhist, Brāhmaṇical and Jaina, but also of ordinary men and women. The eyes express various emotions and the Indian aesthetic canon has a number of similes to express the different emotions, *e.g.*, the innocent look of a woman is compared with

that of the deer (Mriganayanā).

Apart from sculpture, architecture of the Gupta period attained a high degree of excellence. In fact this is an age of both the culmination of earlier architectural style and the inception of the typical styles of Indian temple architecture. The cave architecture, an important fashion of the Pre-Gupta period, yielded to the brilliant temple architecture whose history began in the Gupta period. Thus, the Gupta period, marks the parting of the ways in the history of Indian architecture.

Rock-cut caves adorned with artistic designs represent an aspect of the pre-Gupta architecture. Most of these caves belong to the Buddhistic sect. The cave architecture consists of two types, – the Chaitya, *i.e.* the shine proper and the Saṅghārāma, *i.e.* the monastery. The most notable groups are found at Ajanāt, Ellorā and Bāgh. The remarkable difference of the Gupta Chaityas and those of the early times is the adornment of the Gupta Chaitya's decorative sculpture and especially the appearance of the icons of Buddha on the altar itself in sharp contrast to its absence in the earlier ones. It signifies that the later Buddhist devotees were deeply influenced by the image-worship. Furguson, thus, remarks, "From a pure atheism we pass on an overwhelming idolatry." Though the Brāhmaṇical caves are not rare, yet the cave temple ill-suited the needs of Brāhmaṇical rites and rituals. Thus, the Brāhmaṇical architecture found its best manifestation in the magnificent temples of that period. The renaissant structure with its grandoise mythology and the ebbing Buddhism spelt the doom of cave architecture.

The Gupta temples were mostly flat-roofed with a shallow portico in front, sometimes, a covered ambulatory around the sanctum and sometimes with a squat tower or śikhara over the sanctum. These temples of the Gupta period heralded the two important styles, Nāgara and Drāviḍa which characterised the mediaeval temples of India. Thus, in the history of Indian temples architecture Gupta period is a creative age laying down the basic foundation of the magnificent future development which consists of the elaboration and ramification of the two main styles. *viz.*, Nāgara and Drāviḍa.

Painting flourished no less than the other branches of art in the Gupta period. It became very popular, for it was considered as an essential accomplishment of a cultured man. Contemporary

literature also testifies to its popularity. Kālidāsa portrays Dushyamanta drawing the portrait of Śakuntalā in her absence. Some literary works lay down aesthetic canons concerning painting. It is considered as one of the sixty-four arts in the *Kāmasūtra* of Vātsyāyana. Painting embraces the panorama of life and nature. Royal palaces and the residence of the wealthy were decorated with mural paintings. Besides these there are references to 'Charanachitras' painted on coarse textiles with didactic purport which are undoubtedly the ancesters of 'Patachitras' prevalent even in the 19th century.

Unlike sculpture as the common medium of manifesting spiritual sublimity, painting was mainly concerned with the gay and passing aspect of life. Thus, the paintings of Ajantā, Bāgh and Bādamī, though religious in theme lack a spiritual appeal. Nevertheless, the Gupta paintings of Ajantā and Bāgh can well compare with the fresco-paintings of renaissant Italy. The Ajantā style was predominant. It not only influenced the contemporary Indian paintings, but it travelled far, to Central Asia, China, Japan, Korea and Burma.

The deluge of terracottas unearthed all over northern India evidences the popularity and importance of them in the Gupta period. Terracottas were the material of artistic creation of the humbler people to whom stone and metal were precious and costly medium, especially, in the Gangetic Valley.

Made of soft and frail material terracottas represent life in Gupta age from a different angle. Free from iconographic conventions the clay-modeller worked with intense freedom, and unlike sculpture which was concerned with the manifestation of permanent values, terracottas reflected the passing moods, fashions and prejudices of contemporary life lived by all the strata of the society.

In the pre-Gupta terracottas the faces are in all cases moulded and then affixed to bodies modelled by hand. This complex technique yields to completely moulded—not modelled—figures in the Gupta period.

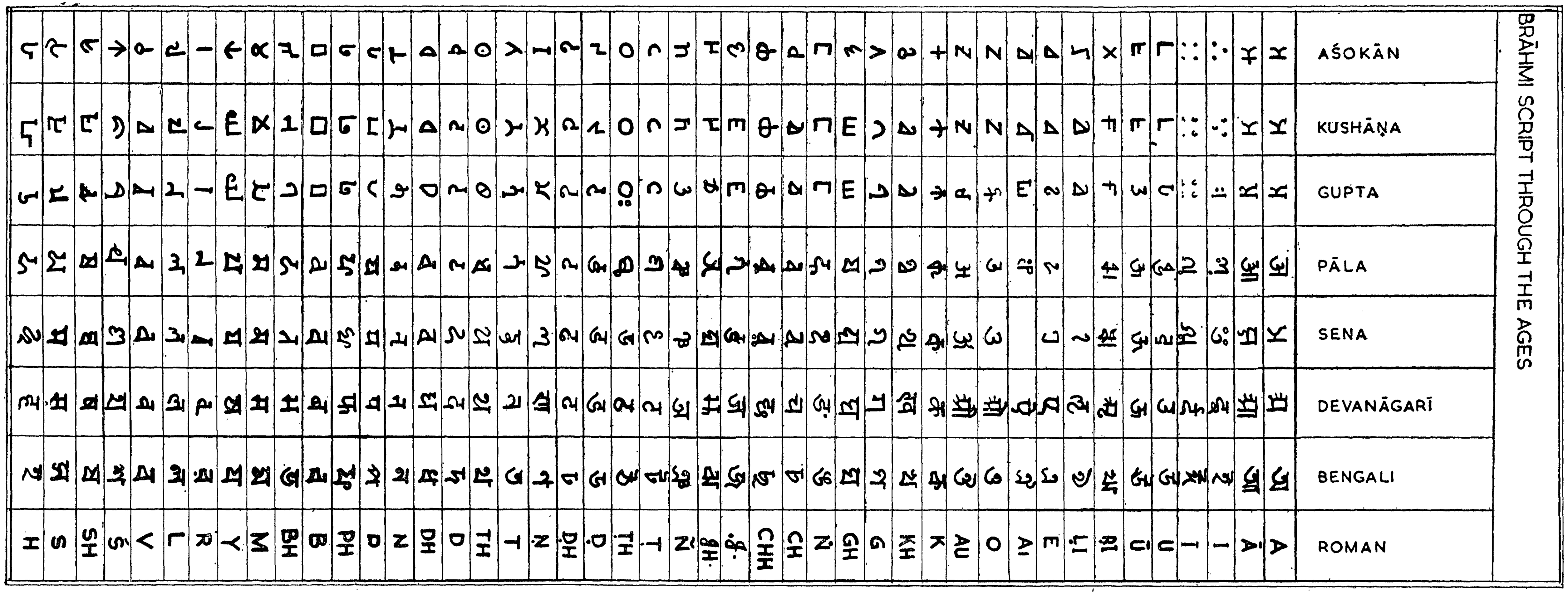
The high skill and efficiency achieved in burning and looking terracotta objects also testify to the high standard of Gupta pottery. Though the archaeological excavations uptil now are not enough yet the remains found at Ahichchhatra, Rājghāt, Hastinapore and Bashar afford an outstanding proof of the

excellence of pottery. The most distinctive class of pottery of this period is "red ware". In the opinion of Mr. A. Ghose and Panigrahi this technique was most probably imported to India from the Mediterranean region.

After this quick survey of Gupta art we may mention briefly some of its special characteristic. The Gupta art is characterised by its simplicity and naturalness of expression which is the sign of living and refined art. The Gupta artists unlike most of their predecessors, do not resort to massive forms to impress the mind. They are not indulged into elaborate decorations which is the index of a moribund art. They eschew both collossal form and intricacy of decoration and steers a middle course.

They also give up sensuous appeal. They are guided by an aesthetic sobriety and simplicity, which we miss in the Kuṣāṇa statues which are of earth and earthly. The Gupta statues are in remarkable contrast to the earthly and sensuous statues of Yakṣiṇī and female forms that betray the nudity of human form.

Moreover, the Gupta art unlike Mauryan art, was not a court-art. It struck deep roots in the contemporary culture of the people and so it is not an isolated chapter in the history of Indian art but owns a lasting effect on Indian art. It was infused with life unlike the prolific art of Gāndhāra which was largely mechanical in character. In the art of the Gupta period all earlier tendencies converge and all foreign influence has been absorbed and Indianised. Thus, in essence the Gupta art is the flower of an established tradition, a polished and perfected medium like the Sanskrit Language.


BRĀHMI SCRIPT THROUGH THE AGES
AŚOKĀN
KUSHĀṆA
GUPTA
PĀLA
SENA
DEVANĀGARĪ
BENGALI
ROMAN

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INDEX

Abhidharmakośa, 208
Abhidharma Piṭaka, 138
Abhidharmasamuchchaya, 208
Abhijñānasakuntalā, 95, 102-04, 106-07, 112, 120n-21n, 125n, 127n, 129n, 130, 130n, 132n-33n, 137n-41n, 143n-45n, 150n, 151, 170n-74n, 183n-87n, 200n-02n, 212n-13n, 217-19n, 225n-26n
Abhira, 8, 31
Achuta, 8, 28-9, 176
Āchārya, 109-10, 112
Āchārya Nāgārjuna, 198
Achinta-Purusha, 83, 177-78
Ādi-Kavi, 222
Ādityavarman, 77
Ādityasena, 78
Ādityavardhana, 76
Adhisthāna-Adhikarana, 98
Agathakles, 182
Agastya, 186
Agni, 170, 172-73, 206
Agnimitra, 16, 121, 211, 221
Agni Purāṇa, 207, 207n
Agnisthāna, 194
Ahichchhatra, 142n, 238-39, 244
Airāvata, 171
Aihole, 231
Aihole Ins. of Pulakeśin, II, 4, 6, 211
Aja, 119, 122, 171
Ajantā, 139, 141n, 188, 230, 236-38, 243-44
Ajayad-Jarto (Jato or Japto), 16
Ajit-Mahendra, 51, 53
Ajitabhaṭṭāraka, 52
Ajita-Vikrama, 48
Ajodhyā, 19
Akalaṅka Deva, 208
Akbar, 39
Akshapatalādhikṛita, 43, 93
Alaka, 7, 180
Allahabad Praśasti, 19, 26, 30, 32, 202
Allahabad Stone Pillar ins., 4, 6-9, 26-8, 37-8, 88, 143, 177, 210
Allahabad Stone Pillar Ins. of Samudragupta, 10, 13, 17, 84, 172n-73n, 180n, 200, 205n
Al-biruni, 24
Alaṃkāras, 219
Alexandria, 227
Amātya, 10, 83, 97, 216
Amitāva Buddha, 208
Amarakośa, 91, 96, 112, 130, 134-135n-136n, 153n, 160-61, 181 191, 225
Amarasiṃha, 211, 225
Ambikā, 21, 181
Amarāvatī, 188, 233, 239, 241
Amrakārdava, 41-2
Amrapali, 131
Aṅga, 79
aṅgas, 83
aṅgula, 157
Ananta, 179
Anantadevī, 68, 88, 121
Ananta-nāga, 179
Anasuyā, 112, 202, 220
Anantavarman, 76
Andhras, 77
Angiras Sāṅkhya, 131n
Anlus Gellius, 1
Annaprāśana, 110

Antaka, 34, 84, 172
Anuloma, 122
Anusāsana Parvaṇ, 152
Aparājīta, 186
apanakas (drinking parties), 45
Āpastamba, 113, 117
Āpastamba Dharmasutra, 113n-16n, 118, 196n
Āpastamba Gṛhyasutra, 131n
Apollo, 229
Apshād ins. of Ādityasena, 7, 77-78, 80
aprahata, 157
apratigha, 57
Apratigha type, 49, 57
Apratiratha, 88
apradā, 157
Apsarās, 171, 236-37
Arabia, 163-65
Archer type of coins, 26, 34-35, 37, 46, 49, 55
Ardha-Māgadhi, 225
Arbuda, 153
Arabian, 227
Arabian Sea, 212
Arjunāyana, 8, 31
Armenia, 165
Arsha, 115, 118, 126
Arthaśāstra, 3, 96, 98, 158, 186n
Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya, 93, 96, 98, 113n-14n, 115, 118, 121n, 126n, 131n, 145n, 181-82
Atharvaveda, 114-15, 206
Arrian, 91
Artha, 110, 127, 218, 222
Arundhatidarśana, 125n
Ārya-Mañjuśrī-Mulakalpa, 26-27, 65-6, 68, 72
Arya, 1, 58, 152
Ārya Sutra, 205 & n, 207n
Ārya Deva, 207
Ārya Asaṅga, 207
Āryaputra, 129
Āryabhaṭṭa, 28, 32, 86-87, 226, 234-35
Ārya Deva, 198
Arundhuti, 131
Aryan, 105, 129, 154, 240
Asanga, 188
Aśoka, 6, 45, 91, 133, 135, 198, 222, 239
Aśokan epigraphs, 91, 97
Aśoka Maurya, 5
Ashṭa-sati, 208
Āsrama, 107-08, 114, 194
Aśvamedha type of (gold) coins, 26-7, 33, 35, 49, 53, 86, 88
Aśvalāyana Gṛhyasutra, 118n, 176 & n
Aśvamedha, 39, 88, 127, 184
āshrama-dharma, 149
Aśvamedha Mahendra, 53
aśvapatī, 93
Aśura, 115, 117
Aśani, 173
Ashes, 174
aṣṭa-murti, 173
Atharva Veda, 3
Athens, 132, 204
Ashṭa-Pradhāna, 89
Atapatra, 142
Atithi, 141
Aurangzeb, 50
Aṅga, 7
Aulikaras of Malwa, 73-4
Avantīvarman, 77, 80
Avatāra, 178-79, 242
Avanti, 14, 153
Avalokiteśvara, 208
Avamuktaka, 30
Ayurveda system, 227
Ayus, 220
Ayodhyā, 182
Azilises, 182

Bactria, 182
Bādāmi, 7, 179, 236, 244
Bāgh, 230, 236-37, 238, 243-44
Baigrām, 231
Baigrām, C. P., 11, 95
Bālāditya, 198
Balavarman, 8, 28
bali, 96, 158
Balkh (Bactria), 42
Balhikas, 87

Baladhikaraṇa, 44
Badhu-varaṇa, 125n
Bakulavālikā, 219
Balanishudana, 176
Bandhuvarman, 51
Bāna, 37, 41, 81, 239
Bāṇabhaṭṭa, 29, 36, 80, 123
Bāṇa's Harshacharita, 4
Banaras, 12, 173, 195, 197
Bāṅglādeśh, 231
Bāṅglār Pujāpārvaṇ, 105
Bāṅglār Vrata, 105
Bas-reliefs of Bādāmi, 179n
Bashār, 44, 244
Batsabhaṭṭi, 13
Battle-axe type of coins, 26, 84
Barabar, 76
Barkmaris, 36
Baudhāyana, 114
Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra, 114n-16n, 121n
Bayana, 19
Bay of Bengal, 9, 212
Bengal, 2
Besnagar, 242
Bhagavāna, 176-77
Bhagavata, 178-79, 206
Bhagavat Rāmagiriswāmi, 178
Bhavaṭṭa-varmaṇ (Bhavadaṭṭa Varmā), 53
Bhavisyapurāṇa, 152n, 206
Bhānugupta, 64, 67-8, 70, 122, 131
Bhānugupta of the Eran Ins., 65
Bharhut ins., 181
bhaṭas, 158
Bhāva, 173, 219
Bhaṣma, 27, 174
Bhāravī, 6
Bharata, 216
Bhāratī, 181
Bharatpur State, 19
Bhavānī, 181
Bhāskaravarmaṇ, 82
Bhaṭṭāraka, 44, 70, 73
Bhāgirathī, 42
bhataśvapati, 44, 93
Bhāga-bhoga, 97
Bhadrapitha, 142
Bhārata, 144
Bhadra, 75
Bhaṭṭini, 128
Bhārhut Buddhist Pillar ins., 17
Bhakti, 187
Bhārut, 233, 239
Bhaṭṭa Brahmavirasvāmin, 79
Bhela Samhitā, 227
Bhikshu, 12, 191, 202
Bhikshu Buddhamitra, 191
Bhimasena, 234
Bhitargaon, 232
Bhitari Stone Pillar ins., 9, 55-6, 58, 60, 64-5, 191n
Bhitari Stone Pillar ins. of Skandagupta, 10, 13, 49, 69, 84, 121n, 143, 180n
Bhitari Seal of Kumāragupta I, 63
Bhuteśvara, 173
Bhutanātha, 173
Bhogabhaṭṭa, 75
Bhoja, 119, 188
Bhrigukachchha (Broach), 75
Bhukti, 10, 97-8
Bhiṭā, 139, 142, 142n
Bhiṭari Seal of Kumāragupta, 66
Bhogika, 92
Bhumara, 231, 234
Bhuma, 173
Bhutivarman, 82
Bhuvaneśvara, 173
Bilsād, 179
Bilsād Stone Pillar ins., 49, 90
Bilsād Pillar ins. of Kum. I, 12
Bihar Stone Pillar ins., 55, 58, 191n
Bihar Stone Pillar ins. of Skandagupta, 10, 181
Bilhaṇa's Vikramāṅka Devacharita, 4
Bimbisāra, 15, 21
Bizago, 180
Boar, 179
Bogra, 18
Bodh-gayā, 9, 32-3, 188, 190, 232
Bodhisattvas, 188, 233-34, 237, 241
Bombay, 164
Brahmā, 115, 118, 126, 146-47, 170,

173-77, 180-81, 192, 206, 217, 229, 242
Brahmagupta, 226
Brahmaṇa (Brāhmin), 3-4, 12, 75, 86, 95, 101, 108-09, 122-23, 127, 132, 146-50, 159, 184, 187, 193-94, 206, 217, 223
Brāhmi, 181
Bramachāri, 183
Brahmanical (Hindu), 12, 33, 114, 148, 152, 176, 198-99, 202-03, 206, 230, 233, 235, 242-43
Brahmanism, 118
Bṛihaspati, 34, 83, 90-1, 96, 111, 123, 131, 153, 157, 159-61, 163, 166-69, 209
Bṛihatsaṁhitā, 131, 159, 161, 226
Bṛihaspatismṛiti, 92, 117n, 134n, 136n, 153
Brahmavaivarta, 206
Brahmaṇḍas, 206
Brahmacharya, 107
Brahmacharya-āśrama, 108
Brāhmi inscription, 17
Brahmarāshṭra, 147
Brahmathāna, 194
Brihatjātaka, 226
Brahmacharya-āśrama, 109
Bhāratī, 171
Buddha, 162, 170, 179, 187-88, 191, 229, 233-34, 237, 241-43
Buddhism, 33, 54, 61, 80, 91, 154, 161, 188, 190, 195, 198, 228, 238, 240
Buddhist, 3, 13, 16, 32, 44, 46, 57, 65, 72, 86-7, 135, 148, 150, 152, 159, 161, 188-90, 195, 197, 202, 205, 207-08, 224-25, 230, 232, 242-43
Buddhist Logician, 198
Budhagupta, 10, 64-8, 70, 72, 86, 197-98
Bundelkhanda, 225
Burma, 238
Bühler, 205
Byzantine empire, 164

Cambodia, 163
Chandra, 10, 16, 21
Chandragupta, 68-9
Chandragupta I, 2, 12, 22-5, 44, 61, 72, 83, 88, 93, 128, 132
Chandragupta II, 2, 8-10, 12, 16, 34-51, 53, 64, 68, 72, 83, 85-7, 89, 93, 99, 172, 178, 197, 199-200, 210-11
Chandragupta III, 72
Chakrapālita, 61-2
Chāmār, 154
Champā, 197
Chandrāditya, 68
Chandragupta-Kumāradevī coins, 21, 24, 35, 168
Chandragupta-Kumāradevī type of coins, 88, 128, 132n
Chandeśvara, 173
Chasia, 188
Chakravikrama type, 37, 46
Chaityas, 188, 198
Charaka Saṁhitā, 227
Chandragupta-Vikramāditya, 49, 199
Charaka, 195, 227
Chaityas, 243
Chakravikrama type, 178
Charanachitras, 244
Chaturmukha, 174
Chaturbuja, 175
Chandra-Vyakaraṇam, 224
Chandravarman of Susunia hill ins., 29
Chandragupta-Kumāradevi, 8
Chālukya king Kirtivarman, I of Bādami, 7
Chaṇḍi, 206
Chandrapāla, 199
Chandella king Yaśovarman, 7
Chandragupta Maurya, 5, 39, 42, 49, 118n, 224
Chandragomin, 224
Chakrapālit, 10
Chandrādevī, 68, 88
Chāru, 158
Chāṭas, 158
Christian era, 195, 240
Chinnock, 91

China, 163-65, 195, 117, 238
Chinese pilgrim, 45-6, 81; 196
Chinese silk, 138
Chinese classics, 129
Chinese pilgrim I-tsing, 17
Chinese Pilgrim Fa-hien, 37
Chinese, 66, 164, 189-90, 192, 197-98
Chināmsuka, 138
Chārudatta, 132, 148n, 223
Chakrapāni (Chakrapālit), 50
Chammak C. P. of Pravarasena, 52
Chandanadāsa, 151
Chaṇḍāla, 154
Chamuṇḍā, 181
Chandeśwara, 183
Chaul, 164
Chakradhara, 176
Chandravarmaṇ, 8, 28-9
Chenwal, 164
Chānakya, 151, 195, 224
Che-li-ki-to-Śrī-Gupta, 18
Chiratadatta, 50-1
Chitralekhā, 219
Chudākarma, 183-84
Chudākarana, 129
Choḷas, 71, 99
Chullavagga (of Vinaya Piṭaka), 195n
Chhatra type, 46, 49, 55
Chalukya, 70-1, 75, 79
Cedis, 7
Ceylon, 2, 163-64, 229
Ceylonese, 9, 188
Central Asia, 238
Celibacy, 130
Couch type, 37, 46
City council, 94
Classical age, 1, 12-3, 107-08, 111-12, 144, 152, 170, 173, 176, 180, 185-87, 190, 201, 223, 225, 227
Classem, 1
Classici, 1
Classic, 1
Classical, 1
Classicus, 1
Confucious, 100
Cosmogony, 206
Dadda I, 75
Dadda II Prasantaraga, 75
Daivaputra-Sāhi-Sāhānu-Sāhi, 8, 32
Daiva, 115, 118, 126
Daityas, 177
Dakshiṇāpatha, 8, 28-9, 85, 87
Dakshiṇā, 119
Dāmodarpur ins. (time of Buddhagupta), 179
Damana of Eraṇḍapalla, 8
Dāmodarpur C. P., 10-1, 43, 50
Dāmodaragupta, 77
Dāmodarpur C.P. of Buddhagupta, 63
Dāmodarasena, 38
daṇḍa, 83, 109, 157
Daṇḍin, 132, 187
Daṇḍapasadhikarana, 44
Darvikarmā, 94
Darwinians, 189
Darwinism, 189
Dāsapura, 45
Dasakumāracharita, 106-07, 132n, 187
Dasavatāra, 232
Dāsas, 152
Dasaha, 183-84
Dasaratha, 121
Dasapura, 45
Dasyus, 152
Dattādevī, 35-6, 68
Devāka, 32, 42
Debasena, 170n
Deluge, 174
Deogarh, 179, 232
Deo-Baranak ins. of Jivitagupta II, 80
Deopārā Ins. of Vijayasena, 7
Deśas, 10
Deśas or Bhuktis (Provinces), 70, 97
Davāka, 8, 31
Devarāshṭra, 30
Devānampṛiya, 84
Devadāśi, 131
Devariṇa, 108
Devagupta, 77-80
Devaki, 69

Devī, 128, 130
Devī-Chandragupta, 35-7, 224
Dhanvantari, 211
Dhanamitra, 130
Dhanada (Kubera), 84-5
Dhanaidaha C. P., 49
Dhanañjaya of Kusthalapura, 8
Dhānya, 97
dhanu, 157
Dharamaśāstra, 104, 117, 193, 198, 202, 208-09
dharma-chakra-pravarttana, 233
Dharmapada commentary, 106, 154
Dharana-gotra, 16
Dhārini, 16, 121, 123, 221
Dharma, 110-11, 127, 147, 195, 214, 218, 222
Dharmasutra, 112
Dharmapatni, 114
Dharma-vijaya, 31
Dhamekh-stupa, 232
Dharasena, 73
Dharma Thākur, 105
Dharmāditya, 79, 94
Dhamapāla, 199
Dharmottara, 206
dhoti, 57
Dhruva I, 200
Dhruvādevī, 49, 68, 121
Dhruvasvāmini, 51
Dhruvasena II, 73
Dhvani, 219
Diddā, 12, 128
Diddā-Kshema, 128
Digha-Nikāya, 152n
Digñāga, 188
Di-khema-gupta, 128
Dīlipa, 85, 161, 171, 215
Dinajpur, 18
dīnāras, 12, 191, 209
Diṅnāga, 198, 208
dīrghikā, 160
Dīvākara, 208
Dīvākarasena, 38, 40
Dramila, 7
Drāviḍa, 230, 243
Drāviḍa style, 232
Droṇasimha, 73
Draupadī, 122
Dudda, 200
Durbāśā, 219
duhitri-śulka, 118
Duprasahahasta (Skandagupta), 57
Dūrga, 12, 21, 25, 46, 54, 187, 216, 231, 238
Dushmanta, 120, 144, 202, 216, 244
Dutaka (spy), 91-2
Dvīja, 111, 149-50, 183-84
Dvarapālas, 241

Egypt, 89, 101, 163
Ekamukha Liṅga, 235
Elephant rider type, 49, 145
Elephant-rider-lion-slayer type, 49
Elizabethan age, 1, 204
Ellora, 230, 243
England, 1, 204
Epics, 85, 110, 193-94, 202, 210-11, 235, 241
Eran Pillar ins. of Goparāja, 10, 131n
Eran Stone Pillar ins., 26
Eran Stone ins. of Samudragupta, 29, 172n-73n, 180
Erotics, 132
Eran ins., 8
Eraṇḍapalla, 30

Fā-hien, 20, 45-6, 135, 154, 161, 188, 195, 197
Faridpur C. P., 11
Faridpur grant of Gopachandra, 96
Farganish, 39
French, 1

Gadhwa stone ins., 37
Gadhwa stone pillar ins. of Ch. II, 13
Gadhwa stone pillar ins. of Kumāragupta I, 13, 49
Gadhwa C.P. of Ch. II, 11
Gaṇas, 171, 174, 182, 231

Gaṅgā, 7, 12, 18, 33, 46, 54, 71, 171, 174, 180-81, 186, 190, 238
Gaṇapatināga, 8, 28-9, 37
Ganeśa, 206
Ganjām plate, 24, 80-1
Gandhika, 152
ganikā, 130-31
Gandhāra art, 239, 241
Gandhāra School, 229, 233
Gandharva, 115, 117, 119-20, 171, 197, 237, 241, 245
Gangetic, 2
Gaṇadāsa, 143, 197
Gaṇapati, 29
Gaṅgā-Yamuna, 234
Ganj ins., 30
Garbhādhāna, 110
Gārhasthaśrama, 108, 110
Gārhasta, 107, 114
Garuḍa-tokens, 32
Gautama, 3, 114, 149, 157, 209
garbhagriha, 231
Garuḍa-sthāna, 194
Gauḍa, 7, 46, 54, 57, 60, 77, 78-81, 171, 176-77
Gauḍas of Bengal, 73
Gaulmika, 160
Gautama Dharmasūtra, 113n-15n, 140n, 196n
Gauḍādhama (Gauḍa Bhujaṇga), 81
Gayā C.P., 8, 26
Gayana, 153
Gayā C.P. of Samudragupta, 10, 19, 93, 96
Gayā, 197
Genii, 241
Ghatotkacha cave ins. of Hastibhoja, 122n
Ghatakarpa, 211
Ghazipur, 19
Ghatotkachagupta, 4, 19-21, 23, 39, 51, 55-6, 64, 68
Ghatotkacha (Śrī), 17
Giriṣa, 173
Girnār rock, 4
Gita Govinda, 221
Gitā, 178
Godāna, 183-84
Gokarṇa, 173
Gokula, 177
Golden age, 1, 204
Goparāja, 40, 131
Gopāla-krishṇa, 177
Gopasvāmin, 93, 96
Gopachandra, 94
gopatha-sarah, 157
goshtis (clubs), 45
Goṭhic art, 228
gotra, 16, 104, 124
Gauri, 181
Govinda, 51
Govindagupta, 39, 46, 52, 68
Grahavarman, 77-80
Graeco-Bactrian, 228
Graeco-Roman, 239
Grāmas, 10
Grāmikas, 11, 98
Grām-Vridha, 98
Grant of the king Guhasena of Valabhi, 200n
Great Kushāṇas, 8, 43
Great Boar, 233
Greco-Roman, 239
Greece, 1, 16, 101, 163, 231
Greek, 1, 15, 18, 101, 204, 241
Gṛhapravesa, 125n
Gresham's Law, 35
Great Emperor Aśoka, 13
Great Mughals, 71
Great Mauryas, 20
Grihini-Grihamuchyate, 129
Gujarat, 2, 164
Gunaighar C.P. (of Vainyagupta), 63, 66, 91, 159
Gunamatī, 199
Guṇas, 176, 219
Gupta-Lichchhavi relation, 21
Guptavaṃśajaḥ, 23
Gupta-Nala, 53
Gupta art, 245
Gupta Age, 84, 225
Gupta Period, 36
Gupta Sārnāth art, 235
Gupta Vaṃśodita, 17
Gupta era, 23-4, 35, 49, 51

Gurjaras of Rajputana, 73, 75
Guru, 176, 194-95
Gurjaras of Nandipuri, 75
Gurjara Pratihāra king of Kanauj, 7
Gwalior, 242

Hamsapadika, 143
Hara, 173
Haradāsa, 143
Haraha ins., 76, 79, 81
Haraha ins. of Iśānavarmaṇ, 76, 80
Harappā, 193
Harappan art, 240
Harichandra, 75, 123
Hari, 176
Hari-Hara, 179
Harisena, 7-9, 13, 29, 202, 120
Hariśvamini, 12
Harini, 186
Harsha, 36, 77
Harshagupta, 77-8
Harshacharita, 3, 37-8, 41, 123
Harshavardhana, 71, 73, 76-7, 81-2, 195, 199-200
hasta, 157
Hastivarman of Veṅgi, 8
Hastināpur, 244
Hastayayurveda, 227
Havirbhuja, 172
Helarāja Chhavillakara, 4
Hellenic form, 241
Helienistic, 229
Hetu-vidyā, 198
Hindus, 108, 111-12, 114, 126, 135, 140, 157, 174-75, 181, 183, 185, 213
Hindu dharma, 102
Hinduism, 188
Hindu Itihasas, 208
Hindu rites, 119
Hindu Śāstrakaras, 153
Hindu Śāstras, 103
Hindu triad, 173
Hiranya, 96-7, 158
Hiranyakasipu, 177
Hiuen-Tsang, 45, 65-6, 73-4, 80-1, 198-200, 202
Horseman-Chatra type, 37
Horse-rider-lion slayer type, 145
Horseman type, 46, 49, 55
Hotri, 119
House of Kanauj, 77-8
House of Thanesvara, 77-8
Hsu-kan, 129
Hunān, 16
Huṇa, 2, 9, 16, 18, 47-8, 53, 56-61, 69, 72, 76-7, 82, 87, 131

Imperial Gupta rulers, 9
Indian Napoleon, 28
Indian, oceam, 9, 164
Indore C.P., 55, 58, 191n
Indo-Aryan, 155, 158
Indo-Greek, 84
Indore C.P. of Skandagupta, 10-1
Indra-loka, 237
Indra, 12, 33, 51, 84, 170-72, 174, 181, 185, 206
Indrānī, 181
Indus, 9
Indus civilization, 193n
Indumatī, 122
Indus Valley, 105, 193
Irāvatī, 121, 221
Īśa, 173-74
Iṣāṇa, 173
Itihāsa, 112, 202, 207
I-tsing, 18, 24, 190, 196, 200
Iśānavarmaṇ, 76, 79
Īśvara, 173

Jainas, 3, 12, 86, 189-90, 197, 202, 207-08, 230, 242
Jaina canons, 195
Jain Saṅgha, 159
Jainism, 33, 54, 190, 161, 195, 208
Jalanirgama, 160
Jalesvara, 173
Japan, 238
Jātakas, 3
Jātaka Stories, 205
Jati, 146
Jātakarma, 110, 183-84

Janapada, 83, 216
Japto, 16
Jarāsanda, 234
Jāvā, 32
Jayadeva, 221
Jayanta, 170, 172
Jetavana-vihāra, 197
Jīnamitra, 199
Jivitagupta, 77-8
Jhansi, 179
Jnañachandra, 199
Junāgarh, 10
Junāgarh ins., 5
Junāgarh Rock ins., 5, 9-10, 13, 39, 50, 55-8, 60-2, 205
Junāgarh rock ins. of Rudradāman I, 5
Junāgarh Rock ins. of Skandagupta, 49, 182, 191n, 209
Junnar, 188
Justinian, 164

Kācha coins, 35
Kāchagupta, 34, 68
Kācha type of gold coins, 27
Kadamba, 130
Kahaum Stone pillar ins., 55, 58
Kailāsha, 232
Kaivarta, 154
Kāka, 8, 31
Kākābali, 184-85
Kakanadaboṭa, 31
Kalachuri, 70-71, 78
Kalama, 134
Kalhana, 5, 128
Kalhana's *Rājataraṅginī*, 4
Kālakuṭa, 174
Kāli, 105, 180-81, 219
Kali age, 206
Kalpa-Vṛksha, 212
Kalyāna, 164
Kākanadaboṭa, 191
Kakka, 75
Kaleyaka, 123
Kālidāsa, 48, 51, 69, 84-6, 89, 93, 95, 118-20, 158, 173, 177, 182-87, 202, 212-13, 215, 220-21, 225-26n, 244
Kaliṅga, 2, 79
Kalki, 179, 206
Kaliṅga, 7
Kaliya, 171, 177
Kalpalata motif, 234
Kāma, 110, 127, 218
Kāmadeva, 185
Kāmarupa, 70, 78, 80-2
Karnasuvarṇa, 80
Kanauj, 73, 80
Kāmanpdaka, 83, 85, 89-91, 95, 145
Kamandulu, 176
Kāmandakiya Nitisāra, 95, 111, 114n-15n, 120-22n, 127n, 132n, 142, 145n, 150n, 151, 153n, 216n,
Kāmarupa, 31-2
Kāmasutra, 118, 127n, 130, 132, 153n, 210n, 206n, 244
Kaṁsa, 177
Kāñchi, 30, 190, 195
Kānheri, 188
Kaṇishka I, 205
Kānva, 125, 133, 220
Kanyā, 130
Kānyakubja, 197
Kanyākumārikā, 212
Kanvyā, 127
Kapila Muni, 186
Kapilāvāstu, 197, 237
Kara, 96-7, 158
Karamdaṇḍa Stone linga ins., 49
Karatoyā, 18
Karavara, 154
Karmāditya, 67
Karṇasuvarṇa, 79-80
Karnikāra, 222
Kartripura, 8, 31-2
Karttaviryārjuna, 171
Kārttikeya (Kumāra), 179
Kārttikeya-sthāna, 194
Kārttikeya type, 49
Kathāsaritsāgara, 57
Kashmir, 4, 7, 153
Kasia, 238
Kasyapa, 33
Kathiawad, 2, 15, 166
Kauntala, 219

Kaupina, 111
Kausiki, 179, 201
Kaustubha, 176
Kausāmbi, 188, 197
Kauṭilya, 83, 91, 93, 130, 195
Kautsa, 196
Kavi-rāja, 34, 200, 210
Kāvya, 207
Kāvya style, 210
Kāvya Mimāṁsā, 38
Kāvyamimāṁsā of Rajasekhara, 36
Kāyastha, 153
Ketu, 171
Kerala, 7
Khādyatapakika, 91
Khājurāho Ins., 7
Khālimpur Copper Plate of Dharmapāla, 7
Kharapārika, 8, 31
Khasas, 7
Khila, 157
Khoh C.P. Ins., 179
Kikatas, 155
Kimpurushas, 171
King Chandra, 42
King and Lakshmī type, 55
King and Queen on conch type, 37
King-Queen-Garuḍa type, 48
Kinnaras, 171, 182, 236
Kirtivarman, 7, 79
Klipta, 95
Kokamukhasvāmin, 179
Korea, 238
Koṣa, 83
Kośala, 7-8, 15, 29, 59, 197
Koṭivarsha, 98
Koṭṭura, 30
Kout-Gudi, 231
Krishṇa, 56, 69, 131, 170, 176-77, 286
Krishṇagupta, 78
Kritānta (Yama), 84
Krodha, 110
Kshapanaka, 211
Kshatrapas, 41
Kshatriya (Vratya-Kshatriya), 22, 108-09, 121-23, 146, 148-52, 194, 217
Kshemagupta, 12, 128
Kshemendra, 4
Kshetra, 157
Kubja of the Talaguṇḍa ins., 6
Kubera, 170, 179-80, 221, 238
Kubera of Debarāshtra, 8
Kuberanāga, 12, 37, 46, 68, 121
Kuda, 188, 231
Kullukabhaṭṭa, 117
Kulyavāpa, 11
Kumbhalgarh ins., 5
Kumāra, 179, 215
Kumāra (Skanda), 222
Kumāradevī, 8, 12, 22, 25, 37, 68, 88, 128
Kumāragupta, 2, 9-10, 12, 39, 78
Kumāragupta I, 35, 40, 46, 48-9, 50-8, 63-4, 69, 72, 83, 85-7, 93, 99, 121, 127, 143, 145, 191
Kumāragupta II, 63-8
Kumāragupta III, 64-8
Kumāragupta III of the Bhitarī seal, 65-6
Kumāra Kārttikeya, 222
Kumāramaty-adhikaraṇa, 44
Kumāramatya Betravarmaṇ, 98
Kumāramatyas, 10, 26, 44, 70, 90, 97, 148
Kumārajīva, 188
Kumārasambhava, 102-04, 106-07, 112, 118n, 123n-25n, 129n-34n, 136, 145n, 170n-76n, 179-81n, 183-87n, 213-15n, 217-19n, 222, 226n, 229n
Kumārī, 181
Kurma, 178-79, 206
Kurpasaka, 137
Kurus, 7
Kuntala family, 52
Kushāṇa, 2, 6, 15-6, 31-2, 48, 84, 99, 138, 161, 173, 179-80n, 204-05, 227, 229, 245
Kushilava, 153
Kushinagara, 197
Kustubha, 177
Kuṭumbikas, 11, 98
Kushtalapura, 30

Laghujātaka, 226
Lāja, 124
Lakshmaṇa, 103, 178n, 232
Lakshmī, 6, 27, 33, 46, 54, 57, 60, 144, 171, 176, 182, 187, 220
Lakshmī (Śrī), 181
Lakshmī-Svayamvara, 144
Lalita Vistara, 205
Langali, 170
Lao Khan, 231
Latadeva, 226
Later Guptas of Magadha, 73
Latin, 1
Lauhitya, 74, 80
Lauria Nandangarh, 240
Lakshman, 210
Lavana, 171
Lekhanis, 225
Lichchhavis, 7-8, 15, 20, 22, 37
Lichchhavi alliance, 21
Lichchhavi-dauhitra, 17, 22-3
Lichchhavi princess, 37
Lichchhavayaḥ, 21
Little Clay cart, 223
Liṅga, 105, 174
Liṅgarāja, 173
Liṅga-Rāj temple, 105
Lion-slayer type, 37, 46, 49
Lobha, 110
Local Council, 94
Lokas, 107
Lokapāla, 170, 174, 180
Lucknow, 19
Lyricist type, 49, 143
Lyrist type of coins, 26, 34, 36

Madan, 170
Madhavya, 219
Madhyadeśa, 20, 135
Madhyadeśa school, 238
Madhyamika, 207
Madhya Pradesh, 2, 166
Madhuparka, 125n
Madraka, 7-8, 31, 196
Mādri, 118
Magadhan origin, 19
Magadha, 2, 7, 9, 14-7, 19-23, 38, 42, 46, 50, 52, 58, 62, 64, 71, 82, 177, 190
Māgadhi, 208, 225
Magadhan Empire, 69
Maghava, 172
Mahādaṇḍanāyaka, 90
Mahabalādhikrita, 92, 148
Mahābhārata, 3, 118, 121n-22n, 131n, 178-79n, 206, 209; Ādi-parva, 115n, 116n, 118n, Sabhā-parva, 116n
Mahboobpur Iron pillar of Chandra, 53
Mahāyāna, 199
Mahākshatrapa Rudradaman II, 205
Manāpuraṇas, 206
Mahārashṭri Prakrit, 200
Mahādevī, 12, 25, 75, 88, 127-28, 133
Mahādevī Anantadevī, 12
Mahākālaniketana, 183n
mahākāvya, 222
Mahā-kāl, 173, 180
Mahāsandhi-Vigrahika, 43
Mahasenāpati, 43
Mahāvaraha, 186
Mahāyāna cult, 188
Maheswarī, 181
Malavikā-Agṇimitra, 200
Mahābodhi, 18, 232
Mahāpratihāra (Chief Chamberlain), 44
Mahāvaraha, 176
Mahādaṇḍanāyaka, 10, 43, 73
Mahādaṇḍanāyaka Harisena, 26
Mahādaṇḍanāyaka Tilabhattaka, 26
Mahādevī Kumāradevī, 21,
Mahākāla, 175
Mahāpilupati, 10
Mahākuta Pillar ins., 7
Mahāpratihāra, 73, 91
Mahārājas, 20-1, 76
Mahārāstri, 208
Mahāsena, 179
Mahāsenagupta, 80
Mahāvamśa, 237

Mahāyana Yogācharya, 234
Mahodayaśrī (Kanauj), 81
Mahājanapadas, 15
Mahākāntāra, 30
Mahākartrakritika, 73
Mahāpilupati, 92
Mahārāja, 17, 24, 46, 69, 73, 132
Mahārāja Devasena, 123n
Mahārāja Dharapatta, 73
Mahārāja Dhruvasena I, 73
Mahārāja Jayanaga, 79
Mahārāja Harivarman, 76
Mahārāja Govindagupta, 44, 51-2
Mahārāja Guhasena, 73
Mahārāja Śrī-Gupta, 7, 17
Mahārāja Ghatotkacha, 7
Mahārāja Gopachandra, 79
Mahārājādhirāja, 12, 17, 23-4, 35, 43, 46-7, 76, 87
Mahārājādhirāja Chandragupta I, 7-8, 20-1
Mahārājādhirāja Kumāragupta I, 179
Mahārājādhirāja Samudragupta, 8
Mahārājādhirāja Ch. II, 44
Mahārāṣṭri, 225
Mahāsāmanta, 73
Mahāsvapati, 93
Mahāvarāha, 177
Mahāvīra, 208
Mahāyāna, 198
Mahāyogi, 174
Mahākuṭa ins., 79
Mahārāshtra, 230
Mahāsenagupta, 78
Mahattaras, 11, 98
Mahāvana, 30
Mahādevī Anantadevī, 58
Mahādevī Kumāradevī, 17
Mahākshatrapa, 61
Mahādeva, 173
Mahendrakalpa, 53
Mahendragiri of Paishṭapura, 8
Makara, 33, 181
Mahāvihāra, 188, 190
Mahendra, 8, 29, 74
Mahendravarma, 51, 53
Mahendra-Kumāra, 53
Mahendrasthāna, 194
Mahendrāditya, 47, 57
Mahendrasena (Kumāragupta I), 57
Mahī, 75
Mahishī, 128
Mālābar, 164
Mālākāra, 152
Mālava, 2, 7-8, 31, 153
Maktabs, 196
Mālavikā, 114, 121, 143, 200-01, 213, 221
Mālavikāgnimitra, 102-03, 106, 112, 121, 123n, 128-29n, 130n, 132n, 136n-38n, 140n, 142n-43n & 144n, 145n, 151, 170n-71n, 173, 177n, 185 & n, 168n, 197n, 212n, 214, 219, 221, 226n-27n
Malava year, 51, 74
Maldah, 18
Malia C.P. Dharasena II, 139
Malay Archipelago, 163
Mallinātha, 118
Maitrayanīya Saṁhitā, 117n
Maitrrakas of Valabhī, 70, 73, 78
Mamallapuram, 179, 231
Maṇasā, 105
Mañcha, 142
Mandavyapura, 75
Mandāsore ins., of Kumāragupta I and Bandhuvarman, 10-1, 13, 43, 45, 51, 210-11
Mandāsore ins. of Yaśodharman, 74, 122n
Māndāsore, 52, 74
Maṅgala chandi, 105
Mānkuwar Stone image ins. of Kumāragupta I, 191n
maṇḍapa, 231
maṇḍalas, 172
Māndākrāntā, 221
Māndāsore ins., 70, 79
Mandāra, 133
Mangalore, 164
Mankuwar Buddhist Stone image ins., 13, 43
Man-lion, 179
Manikara, 153

Maniyar Math, 231
Mantrarāja of Kaurala, 8
Mantras, 129, 150, 186
Mantri-Kumāramātyas, 90
Mantri-Parishad, 90
Mantrans, 10, 43
Manu, 3, 28, 83, 90-1, 95, 98, 108-09, 111-12, 113n, 115n-18n, 119, 121, 122n, 123, 126n-27n, 129n, 131 & n, 139n, 146, 150n, 153n, 157n, 183n-84n, 195n, 197n, 209
Manusmriti, 22, 95, 154
Maradharshana, 237
Mārāthas, 71
Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, 110, 206
Mathurā, 9, 19, 29, 37, 45-6, 91, 130, 177, 181-82, 188, 197, 225, 229, 233-34, 241-42
Mathurā stone ins. of Chandragupta II, 172n-73n
Matila, 8, 28
Matribala Jātaka, 237
Matriposhaka, 237
Mantrarāja, 30
Matsya, 178-79, 206
Mathura Stone ins. of Chandragupta II, 180
Mathura pillar ins., 37
Mittila, 28
Matsya Purāṇa, 161, 179n
Maukharies, 70, 71-73, 76, 78-80, 82
Maukhari-Pusyabhuti alliance, 77
Maues, 182
Maurya, 15, 44-5, 69, 71, 84, 99-100, 118, 158, 163, 186
Mauryan, 163
Mauryan court, 240
Max Müller, 204-06
Medantaka, 75
Meditarranean, 240
Meghaduta, 112, 129n, 132n-33n, 139n-41n, 143n-44n, 178n, 183n-86n, 200n, 213-14, 218n, 219, 220n-21, 223
Megāsthenis, 3, 18, 45, 158
Meghavarṇa, 8, 25, 32
Meguti, 231
Meharauli Iron Pillar ins. of King Chandra, 9, 37, 42, 162
Mekala country, 59, 109
Menakā, 144, 220
Mesopotamia, 101
Middle Ages, 195, 227
Mihirakula, 9-10, 16, 18, 64, 66-67, 70, 74
Mimāṁsā, 198, 211
Minister's Signet Ring, 224
Mirpur Khas, 232, 242
Mitra, 83, 216
Mithilas, 7
Mitradevī, 68
Mitravasu, 144
Mlechchhas, 56, 58-9, 154
Mohanjodāro, 173
Mohra, 142
Moksha, 103, 107-08, 110-11, 127, 218, 223
Mrichchhakaṭika, 132n, 148, 153, 223
Mrigasikhāvana (Mi-li-ki-a-si-kia-po-no), 18, 130, 188
Mriganayana, 243
Mrigayā, 145
Mudrārākṣhasa, 151, 224
Mughal Empire, 69
Mukshaka, 7
Mauryan art, 237, 239-40, 245
Murshidābād, 18
Muslim, 40

Nababadhu, 137
Nabamalikā, 133
Nachna Kuthara, 231
Nachna ins., 30
Nāgananda, 200
Nāgārajunikoṇḍa, 188
Nāgadatta, 8, 28
Nagasena, 28-9
Nāga Jātaka, 237
Nagara, 230, 243
Nagarahāra, 197
Nāgas, 29, 37, 59, 75, 238
Naga house of Padmāvatī (of Mathura), 37

Nāgārjuni Hill cave ins., 76
Nagara-Śreshthi, 6, 11, 151, 153
Nāgārjuna, 207, 227
Nagara style, 232
Nalagiri Jātakas, 237
Nālandā, 8, 18, 197-99, 208, 234
Nālandā Brother, 199
Nālandā C.P., 26
Nālandā C.P., of Samudragupta, 10, 19
Nālas, 52-3, 157
Nālandā seal of Vishṇugupta, 67
Nālandā seal, 63
Nālandā Mahāvihāra, 66, 198
Nālandā seal of Vishṇugupta, 68
Nālandā Mahāvihāra, 199, 202
Nalapatna, 164
Nāmakaraṇa, 110
Nāmadheya, 183-84
Nanda, 224
Nandi, 8, 28, 171, 174
Nandi (Bull), 60
Nandipuri, 75
Nāpita, 152
Nāgabhaṭa, 75
Nārada, 33, 83, 91, 95-6, 111, 123, 130, 139, 159, 160-61, 163, 166-69, 196, 206, 209, 212
Nārada Smṛti, 92, 95, 112-13, 115, 117-18, 130n, 136n, 139n, 148n-149n, 153n, 196n
Naravardhana, 76
Narasimhagupta (Bālāditya), 63-68, 198
Narasimhagupta II, 67-8
Nārāyanabhaṭṭa, 184
Nārāyana, 177-80
Narasimhagupta Bālāditya II, 70
Nasik cave ins., 97
Nati, 144
Natyaśāstra, 144
Navanitakam, 227
Nava-ratna-Sabhā, 48
Navaratna, 47, 211
Nagendra Kanyā, 181
Narendra-chandra, 16
Narendrasena, 52-3, 59
Nellore, 2
Neo-Brahmanism, 235
Neo-Hinduism, 187
Neolithic Age, 240
Nepal, 8
Nilamani's chronicle, 5
Nilamani, 4
Nilalohita, 173-74
Nilakantha, 173-74
Nilrāja of Avāmuktaka, 8
Nirvana Tantram, 180
Nirvāna, 180
Nishāda, 154
Nitisāra, 85
Nitisāra of Kāmandaka, 90
nivāra, 134
non-Aryan, 154
Nripa, 78
Nṛsimha, 179, 206, 242
Nyāya, 211
Nyayavarta, 208

Oudh, 225
Orissa, 2

Padmā, 42, 206
Padmāvatī, 29, 45
Pahārpur C.P., 11, 95, 188, 231
Paisācha, 115, 117
Palakka, 30, 223
Palakapya, 227
Pālas, 99
Palāsinī, 61
Pallava, 190
Pañcha Siddhantikā, 226
Panchika, 237
Paṇdita, 201
Paṇḍu, 118
Pāṇḍya, 7, 190
Pāṇini, 76, 195, 224
Pānnā, 238
Panteleon, 182
Parākramāṅka, 88
Paramabhāgavata, 43, 46, 178
Paramabhāgavata-Mahārājādhirāja, 12
Paramabhattaraka, 43, 46, 83

Parama-bhaṭṭāraka-Mahāraja-dhiraja, 39, 48
Parama-daivata, 83, 178
Paramartha, 65
Parama-Vaishṇava, 178
Paramartha, 188
Parashara Grihyaśutra, 117n
Parasurāma, 171, 242
Parameśvara, 75, 173, 192
Parṇadatta, 10, 50, 61-2, 97
Pārthians, 15, 204
Pārvatī, 119, 136, 171, 174, 181, 214, 222, 231, 238
Pāsa, 173
Paśupatī, 173
Patachitras, 244
Pāṭakas, 159
Pāṭaliputra, 17, 20, 22, 41, 44-5, 47, 60, 89, 197
Pāṭaliputra-Puravara-Adhiśvara, 41, 45, 47-8
Patañjali, 224
Paulisa, 226
Paulkasa, 154
Paurāṇic texts, 59
Paurāṇic Vishṇu, 172
Periclean age, 1, 16, 204
Periclean Athens, 101
Persia, 163-65
Pinaki, 173
Piṇḍa, 112
Pitari-divam-upe(te), 59
Pitririṇa, 108
Pitri-riṇa,127, 133
Pitris, 182
Pistāpura, 30
Poona C.P., 9
Poona C.P. of Prabhāvatīguptā, 2, 38, 125
Prabhākara, 59
Prabhākaravardhana, 30, 76-9
Prabhamitra, 199
Prabhāvatī, 175
Prabhāvatī Guptā, 2, 9, 12, 16, 37, 40, 46, 68, 88, 128, 132, 178
Prādesikas, 97
Pradyota, 15
Prajāpatya, 115, 119, 125-26, 176
Prakasāditya, 64, 66-8, 145
Pralaya, 174
Prarjunas, 8, 31
Prasāda (gift of sweet), 46, 178
Praśasti, 7, 74
Prasenjit, 15
Prathama Kāyastha, 6, 11, 98, 153
Prathama-kulika, 6, 11, 98, 153
Pratihāra, 123
Pratiloma, 122
Pratimā, 183
Pratyanta, 42
Pravarasena II, 38, 40, 52, 200
Prayāga, 23, 45
Prayogaratna, 184
Prithivī, 170-71
Prithvirāja-Samjuktā episode, 116n
Prithvīsena, 30, 148
Priyadarśikā, 200
Priyamvadā, 112, 202, 219-20
Proletarii, 1
Ptolemy, 30
Pulakeśin I, 79
Pulakeśin II, 4
Pulverised rock, 236
Pumsavana, 110, 183
Punarbhu, 130
Puṇḍravardhan, 190
Puṇḍravardhana Bhukti, 51, 53
Punjab, 8
Purāṇas, 19, 85, 108, 112, 152, 184, 187, 193, 202, 206, 208, 235
Purandara, 172
Purāṇic, 170-71, 177, 179, 186, 194
Purāṇic pantheon, 242
Purohita, 148
Purugupta, 12, 47-48, 52-3, 56, 58, 63-6, 68
Puruhuta, 148n, 171, 184-85
Pururavas, 220
Purushattama, 176, 220
Purusupuara, 197
Pushkara, 176
Pushtapālas, 10, 93-94
Pushyabhuti, 76
Pushyabhutis of Thānesvar, 70
Pushyamitra, 9, 33, 53, 56-60, 65, 69, 87, 221

Pushyavarman, 81
Putresti-yajña, 184

Queen Mary II of England, 128

Rabikirti, 211
Rāḍha, 206
Rāḍha division, 18
Raghu, 99, 108, 121-22, 136, 171, 211, 216, 222
Raghuvamśa, 48, 85, 87, 118-19, 122-25n, 126, 133-34, 136 & n, 141n-42n, 185n-86n, 216 & n, 217n-19
Rājā, 175-76
Rājanitiprakāsa, 89
Rāja-chakravartin, 33
Rājan, 83
Rajakas, 152
Rājasuya, 172
Rājashahi, 18
Rājādhirāja, 75
Rājagriha, 197
Rājatarañgini, 3
Rājā Vikramāditya, 47
Rājendra Choladeva, 4, 6
Rājgrāṭ, 142, 239, 244
Rajputana, 8
Rājya, 83
Rājyaśrī, 76-80
Rājyavarthana, 76, 80, 87
Rākṣasa, 115, 117
Rāma, 35, 103, 170, 177-79, 214
Rāma-Dāsarathī, 178
Rāmagrāma, 197
Rāmagupta, 34-6, 39-40, 68
Rāmāyana, 187, 208-09, 222
Rāmgiri, 221
Ranabhāṇḍadhikarama (Supdt. of Military Exchequer), 44
Rangpur, 18
Rāni, 128
Rasa, 219
Rāshṭra, 83, 216
Rāshṭriya Pushyagupta, 5
Rāshṭrakuṭa, 36, 38, 47, 71, 99
rathas, 231
Rathakāra, 154
Ratnāvalī, 200
Ratnagiri, 232
Ravikirti, 122
Rāvaṇa, 171, 177
Rawal, 36
Rakha, 232
Ṛgveda, 3, 101, 172-74, 176, 220
Ṛgvedic India, 172
Rhinoceros-slayer type, 49, 145
Rithpur C.P. of Prabhāvatīguptā, 9, 12, 38, 52
Rishiriṇa, 108
Rishi, 182, 193-94, 202
Ritusaṁhāra, 107, 134n, 135, 137n-38n, 140n, 170n, 218-19, 221
Ritutsava, 184-85
Rohtasgarh Seal-matrix, 80
Romaka siddhanta, 226
Roman, 1, 209, 241
Roma, 1, 163
Rudra, 173
Rudradāman I, 4, 62, 265
Rudradeva, 8, 28
Rudrāksha, 176
Rudrasena, 28
Rudrasena II, 2, 37, 40
Rudrasena III, 41
Rumminidi in the Nepalese Tarai, 6
ruru, 109

Sabaras, 155
Sabda-vidya, 198
Sabhyas, 90
Sachi, 180-81
Sachiva-Samdhivigrahika, 89
Sādhu, 34
Sagara, 170
Sahadharminī, 114, 127
Sahasāṅka, 38
Sahasranetra, 172
Śaivas, 44
Śaivism, 54, 187, 190
Śaka, 31- 48, 199, 224
Śaka era, 24

Śaka king, 8, 35
Śakāri, 47-8
Śakas, 2, 9, 18, 37-41, 47, 84, 87, 89, 197n, 204-05
Śakas of Ujjaini, 41
Śaka Satraps, 38
Śaka war, 38
Saketa (Oudh), 19, 23
Sakra, 172
Sakrāditya (Kumāragupta I), 67, 198
Śakti, 180
Śakunas, 57
Śakuntalā, 1-2, 112, 114, 120, 125, 133, 144, 148, 173, 202, 213, 217-18, 220, 244
Sāli, 134
Salopatana, 164
Samāchāradeva, 79
Sāmanta, 4, 6, 8, 19, 26-7, 31-2, 35, 42
Sāmanta Nārāyanabhadra, 79
Samba, 206
Sambhu, 173
Saṁdhivigrahika, 92
Sami, 186
Sāmidatta of Kaṭṭura, 8
Samkāsya, 197
Sammati-tarka-sutra, 208
Samrāt, 75
Samsakāras, 110, 114, 122, 150, 183
Samudragupta, 2, 7, 9, 20, 23-5, 30-1, 34, 36-9, 44, 46, 48-9, 56, 68, 72, 84-90, 93, 95, 99, 127, 143, 168, 172, 181, 190, 202, 210-11
Sanakānika, 8, 31
Sanakānika Mahārāja, 41
Sanasidha, 12
Sāñchi, 31, 41, 170, 188, 231, 233, 239
Sāñchi ins., 9-10, 37, 46, 49
Sāñchi ins. of Chandragupta II, 13
Sāñchi stone ins. of Chandragupta II, 191n
Sandhivigrahika, 26, 90
Sandhyakara Nandi, 18
Sangali C.P., 36
Sanjān Plate of Amoghavarsa, 116n
Saṅkara, 173
Saṅkaragaṇa, 78
Saṅkar Matha, 231
Saṅkha Samhitā, 197
Sāṅkhaśutra, 196
Sāṅkhya, 211
Sāṅkhyāyana Brāhmaṇa, 173 & n
Saṅkur, 211
Sannyāsa, 107
Sannyās-āśrama, 111
Saptaṅga, 216
Sapta-Mātrikā, 181
Saptapadi, 124
Saradvanta, 176
Sāranāth Buddhist Image ins. of Kumāragupta I, 13
Sāranāth Buddhist image ins. of Buddhagupta, 63
Sārnāth ins., 65-66
Sāranāth Ins. of Kumāragupta II, 66
Sāranāth Ins., of Prakāsāditya, 66
Sāraṅgarava, 176
Sāraṅgi, 176
Sarasvatī, 170-71, 180-81, 206
Sārdulavarman, 76
Sarga, 186
Sari, 137
Sariputta, 198
Sārthavāha, 6, 11, 98, 151, 153, 163
Sarva, 173
Sarva-Aṭavika-rājya, 29
Sarvarājochchhetta, 88
Sarva-Siddhantagusu, 226
Sarvavarman, 77
Śaśāṅka, 24, 77, 81
Samājas (festive gatherings), 45
Śāstras, 75, 112-13, 129, 199, 207
Śāstrakāras, 107, 113
Śatakratu, 172
Śatapatha, 173
Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, 176, 178n
Sātavāhana, 15, 17, 47, 71, 97
Sati, 130-31
Sattra, 158
Sattva, 175-76

Satyabhāmā, 131
Saulkika, 96, 159
Saundika, 153
Sakraseni, 225
Sautasutra, 97, 153
Śāvitrī, 206
Scriptor Classicus, 1
Scriptor Proletarions, 1
Scythians, 15
Scythian yoke, 40
Scytho-Pārthians, 6
senāpati, 73, 88
Sesha, 170-71
Servius Tivellius, 1
Seth, 151
Set Māhet, 6
Setubandha-kāvya, 200
Seven Mothers, 171, 180-81
Shaw-danta, 237
Shad-danta Jātaka, 237
Shah-Jahan, 50
Shakespeare, 86
Sheshthi, 105
She-kia-Fang-che, 66
Siam, 163
Śibi, 237
Siddhanta, 226
Siddhas, 171, 182
Sikha, 184
Sikhara, 243
Śikhāvandhana-vidyā, 185
Śilabhadra, 199
Śilāditya I, 78
Śilāditya I Dharmāditya, 73-74
Siṁha, 171
Siṁha-chandra, 16
Siṁha Mahendra, 53
Simhasena, 142
Sımhatavedena, 237
Simhavāhinī, 21
Simha-vikramah, 48
Sindhu, 153, 164
Sinduradānī, 21, 25
Sirpur, 232
Sita, 103, 133, 213-14, 178n
Sitapur, 19
Sitikānta, 173-74
Śiva, 12, 53, 60, 105, 136, 170-75, 177, 180-81, 183, 186-87, 190-92, 206, 214-15, 217, 219, 222, 229, 231, 238
Śivachandra, 94-5
Śivajī, 89
Si-yu-ki, 66
Skanda, 170, 179, 206
Skandagupta, 2, 9, 16, 46-47, 50, 52-53, 55-61, 63-7, 69, 72, 85-7, 93, 95-7, 99, 121, 168, 191
Skandagupta Vikramāditya, 58
Skandavarman, 53
Smriti, 84, 99, 107, 112, 114, 117, 129, 187, 195, 208
Soma, 122
Somasthāna, 194
South East Asia, 165
Spanish, 1
Sraddhā, 129
Sraddhā-kriya, 110
Śrama, 107
Śramanas, 86, 127
Śrāvasti, 6, 154, 237
Śreshthi, 151, 163
(Śrī) Chandragupta, 16-7
Śrī-Gupta (che-li-ki-to), 17, 19-20, 23-25, 68, 190
Śrīkantha, 76
Śrī-Kumāradevī (Kumāradevī-Śrī), 21
Śrī-Mahāsāmanta Śaśāṅkadeva, 80
Śrī-Mahendra, 51, 53
Śrī-Mahendra-Simha, 53
Śrī-Vikramah, 43, 48
Stanamsuka, 137
Standard type of coins, 26, 34, 37, 46
Sthānesvara (mod. Thaneswar), 76
Sthānu, 173
Sthiramatī, 199
Strabo, 91
Strīdhana, 127, 139
Strīratna, 133n
Stupas, 188
styanurodhena, 81
Sudarsana Lake, 5, 63
Śudraka, 86, 132, 153, 223
Śudras, 58, 123, 146, 150, 152, 154, 194, 217

Śudravarga, 153
Sudurjaya, 198
Sukhāvatī, 208
Sukhavati Vyuha, 208
Śukla-Paksha, 123
Śukra, 83, 149
Śukra-Nitīsāra, 3, 149n, 216n
Sulabhṛt, 173
Sulikas, 77
Sulka, 59, 96
Sulkis, 77
Sultangunge, 242
Sultanganj Buddha, 234
Sūtras, 117n, 199
Sumātrā, 32, 163
Sumera, 51
Sun, 187, 190-91
Śuṅga, 17, 181, 187, 211
Śuṅga-Kānva art, 240
Supreme deity, 192
Surāṅganās, 171
Surendra, 172
Suresvara, 172
Suru, 237
Survavarman, 80
Susruta, 227
Susruta Saṁhitā, 227
Susthitavarman, 78, 80
Surya, 12, 170, 226, 234, 238
Suvarnika, 153
Suvāstu, 197
Suvarna (dīnāras), 11, 97
Suviṣṇu, 198
Suvrata, 4
Svāmin, 83, 216
Svayambhu, 175
Svayamvara, 119
Svetavarāhasvāmin, 179
Svāmi-Mahasena, 179
Swordman type, 49
Syamaka-paddy, 134
Syria, 163

taḍāga, 160
Taittriya Āranyaka, 178n
Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa, 176n, 178n
Takshashilā, 197
Talavara, 44
Tama, 175-76
Tāmbulika, 153
Tāmralipti, 45, 164, 197
Tao-te-king, 189
tapas, 233
Tapasyā, 218
Taraka, 222
Tārānāth, 198
Tathāgatagupta, 69, 198
Taxila, 195
Taxila University, 195, 198
Ters, 231
Thāneswar, 73, 77-8, 80, 82
Tigawa, 231
Tiger-slayer type of coins, 26, 33-4, 49
Tirabhukti (Tira), 44
Tirabhukti-upasika-adhikaraṇa, 44
Tiraskārinī-vidyā, 185
Tirtha, 208
Tirumālāi rock ins., 4
Tols, 196
Toramāna, 9, 70
Traikuṭaka, 52
Trimsika, 208
Trimurti, 170, 177
Trinetra, 173
Tryambaka, 173
Tumain Fragmentary ins. of Ghaṭotkachagupta, 49, 55
Tumburu, 33, 143
Tumbavana, 39, 52
Turki Sultanate of Delhi, 69
Tvastra, 170, 173

Udakumbha-vidhānam, 186
Udayagiri, 89, 190
Udayagiri caves, 230
Udayagiri ins., 9, 37, 41
Udayagiri cave ins. of Chandragupta II, 190-91
Udyāna, 15, 197
Udayāna yatrās (garden-parties), 45
Udraṅga, 96, 158
Ugra, 173

Ugrasena of Palakka, 8
Ujjayini, 38, 41, 45-6, 48, 173, 183, 195, 197-99, 211, 224
Ujjayainī-Puravara Adhiśvara, 38, 41, 45, 47-8, 199
Umā, 133, 180-81, 213-15
Upagupta, 16, 77
Upaklipta, 96
Upanayana, 109-10, 112, 129-30, 150, 183-84
Upanishadas, 175, 193, 198, 211
Upa-Purāṇas, 206
Uparikas, 44, 90, 96-97, 99, 158
Upavita, 109
Uncha-paddy, 134
Urvaśī, 144, 212, 220
Usanas, 90
Ushnisha, 137
Uttarāpatha, 8, 28
Uttaraphālguni, 123
Uttar Pradesh, 19
Uttariya, 137

Vāgisa, 175
Vāhana, 171
Vaijayantī, 7
Vaikālika, 153
Vainyagupta, 63-4, 66-8
Vainyagupta Dvādasāditya, 72
Vaisālī, 21, 52, 107, 131
Vaisālī seal, 51-52
Vaisesika school, 227
Vaishṇavas, 44, 179
Vaishṇavīs, 54, 178, 181, 187, 190
Vaiśya, 109, 146, 148, 150-52, 194, 217
Vaivasvata, 172
Vājapeya, 184
Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā, 173 & n
Vajra, 67-8, 74, 198
Vajrapāṇī, 172
Vajri, 172
Vākāṭaka, 2, 9, 12, 15, 28, 30, 38, 43, 88, 122, 128, 132, 178, 200
Vākāṭaka-kuntalas, 53
Valabhi, 78, 198
Valabhi Mahāvihāra, 200
Valabhi Siddhasena, 208
Valhikas, 9, 42, 48, 57
Vālmikī, 222
Vāmana (Dwarf), 178-79, 206
Vanaprastha-āśrama, 107-08, 110
Vaṅga, 7, 9, 79
Vaṅga country, 42, 70
Vanijas, 151
Vāpi, 160
Vappaghoshavaṭa, 79
Varāha, 179, 206, 242
Varāha Avatāra, 179
Varāhachatra, 179
Varāha-kṣetra, 179
Varāhamihira, 48, 86, 131, 134, 159-60, 211, 226-27
Varāhi, 181
Vārānasi, 45, 57, 197
Vararuchi, 211
Vārendra (Vārendrī), 18
Vargabhimā, 105
Varamans, 59
Varmans of Kāmarupa, 73
Varṇāśrama, 217
Varuṇa, 12, 34, 84-5, 170, 172-73, 206
Varunī, 144
Vasantasenā, 132, 233
Vasantotsava, 144, 185
Vāsava, 172
Vascala of Mandasor Ins., 6
Vasistha, 117
Vāstu, 157
Vāsudeva, 34
Vāsudeva Krishṇa, 177
Vasubandhu, 33, 188, 207
Vatsa, 15
Vatsabhaṭṭi, 202, 210-11
Vatsabhaṭṭi of the Māndāsor ins., 6
Vatsyāyana, 106, 111-12, 114, 118, 120, 122, 130, 178, 201, 244
Vattura, 7
Vāyu, 206
Vāyupurāṇa, 59, 107, 152n, 179n
Vadāṅgas, 198
Vedānta, 211
Vedas, 75, 99, 108, 110, 129, 150, 176, 193-94, 198, 211

Vedha, 175
Vedic, 122, 129, 158, 181, 193, 206
Vedic Indians, 194
Vena, 149, 152, 181, 184
Veñgi, 30
Veshtana, 137
Vetālabhaṭṭa, 211
Victorian, 1
Vidarbha, 151, 221
Vidhātā, 175
Vidiśā, 29, 151
Vidusaka, 201, 219
Vidyadharas, 171, 182
Vidyas, 108
Vihāra, 195, 197, 200
Vihat-dharma, 206
Vikramāditya, 36, 38, 47-9, 57, 72, 211
Vikramāditya-Śakāri, 41
Vikramāṅka, 48
Vikramorvasiyam, 103, 106, 108, 136n-142n, 144n, 171n, 173 & n, 174n, 177n, 180n, 183n-86n, 212n, 217 & n, 219 & n
Vikrama-saṁvat, 47
Vimala, 208
Vindhya mountain, 2
Vinayasthiti-sthāpaka, 44
Vinayasura (chief censor), 44
Vinaya texts, 131-32n
Virasena, 122
Virasena Saba, 41-42, 89, 191, 210
Visakhadatta, 36, 86, 223-24
Visayapati, 70, 90, 94, 98-9
Vishayas, 10, 70, 98
Vishṇu, 8, 12, 33, 46, 60, 127, 173-79, 181, 190-91, 206, 209-10, 217, 238
Vishṇugopa, 30
Vishṇugupta, 63-4, 66-8, 77, 86
Vishṇugupta Chandrāditya, 67
Vishṇugopa of Kāñchi, 8
Vishṇugupta of the Nālandā Seal, 65
Vishṇukundins, 7
Vishṇupalitabhatta, 148
Vishṇupurāṇa, 23, 59, 116n, 175n, 207 and n
Vishṇusthāna, 194
Visṇusmriti, 109-10, 115n-16n, 149n, 153n, 196n
Viṣṭhi, 96
Viśvajīt, 184
Viśvakarmā, 173
Visvāmitra, 220
Visvanātha, 173
Viśvesvara, 173, 183
Viśvantara, 237
Vitarāga Jayabhaṭa I, 75
Vivāha, 110, 183-84
Vivasvasthāna, 194
Vratas, 184, 206
Vrigukachchhaya (Broach), 40
Vrihat Nāradiya, 206
Vrisha, 171
Vṛshabhadhvaja, 173
Vyāghradeva, 30
Vyāghraparākrama, 88
Vyāghrarāja, 29
Vyāghrarāja of Mahākantara, 8

Yajña, 112
Yājñanavita, 109
Yājñavalkya, 3, 107, 111, 121-23, 131, 196, 209
Yājñavalkyasmriti, 109-10, 113n, 116n, 127n, 131n, 147, 147n, 153n, 196n
Yaksha, 129, 133, 143, 177, 182, 200, 214, 221, 241
Yakṣhnī, 245
Yama, 85, 170, 172
Yamunā, 174, 177, 180-81, 238
Yātrās, 45
Yavarāja Tushāspa, 5
Yaśodharman, 70, 74, 76-7, 79, 82
Yavanas, 57
Yaudheya, 8, 31
Yayāti, 171
Yoga, 108, 211, 242
Yoga-śāstra, 198
Yogī, 57, 228
Yogin, 229
Yogic, 228

Yuan Chwang, 18
Yudhisthira, 85, 210
Yumunā, 171
Yuvaraja, 44, 88-9, 216

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